LAWRENCE GOODWYN: THE COMING POLITICAL REALIGNMENT

The Nation.

IMUS'S ENABLERS
Alexander Cockburn

HISS IN HISTORY
Victor Navasky

THE RISE OF THE *NEW YORK SUN*
Scott Sherman

INEVITABLE REVOLUTIONS
Gyan Prakash

THE ESTABLISHMENT RETHINKS GLOBALIZATION

WILLIAM GREIDER

APRIL 30, 2007
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LETTERS

BLACKWATER: GUNS FOR HIRE

St. Petersburg, Fla.

■ Thanks for Jeremy Scahill's April 2 cover story, "Shadow Army: How Blackwater Became Part of Bush's War Machine." That may well be the big sticking point with the troop pullout. Blackwater has all those contracts locked in. With our troops out of Iraq what happens to Blackwater USA? JEROME SANDY

Chicago

■ What disturbs me most about contractors fighting the war is how it dilutes the fatality totals. I get my death totals from icasualties.org, which has a contractor death total of 155. Jeremy Scahill's article says 700, which, with the totals from Iraq and Afghanistan, would put the total "war on terror" US death tally well above 4,000. Why doesn't the damned "liberal" media report *that*? JOHN JONES

San Jose, Calif.

■ Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights sums up my thoughts: "Mercenaries make wars easier to begin and to fight—it just takes money and not the citizenry." Most Americans will feel little urgency to oppose a war being fought by people who were hired, not enlisted or drafted. CHARLIE AHERN

Edmond, Okla.

■ I worked for Blackwater in Butte, Louisiana, and have worked for several other private organizations. I not only served my country during Vietnam but have twenty-eight years in law enforcement. I worked the meanest streets in Los Angeles: Compton. I was a member of the SWAT team and a special felony unit. I have worked every assignment in the profession. My last assignment was as commander of a special unit called the Judicial Protective Unit. I found Jeremy Scahill's article to be disgusting and very unprofessional. The team members I worked with were of the highest caliber. We did not stand around and brag or tell outrageous inflated stories. Blackwater was run as a very professional paramilitary close-knit group. We worked long hours on protection and also helped the citizens in the community. I deeply resent the suggestion that Blackwater is nothing but a bunch of "mercenaries."

CAPT. RICHARD DANIEL, RET.

Washington, DC

■ Jeremy Scahill's article on the private security contractor industry contains serious misrepresentations about my legislation to bring accountability to the industry (HR 369). Although I commend Scahill for shining a light on this important issue, he fails to characterize my bill accurately. Let me set the record straight.

First, Scahill claims my bill has no teeth to prosecute rogue contractors on the battlefield. On the contrary, and as I personally explained to Scahill, my bill would require the Federal Bureau of Investigation to establish a field investigative unit for this very purpose wherever private security contractors work side by side with the military. If Scahill knows of a better process for prioritizing such investigations, I would love to hear it.

Scahill also attempts to cast doubt on the intent of my bill by claiming it has the "strong endorsement" of the private military industry. That is certainly news to me. While I welcome support from all stakeholders, the only organization that has strongly endorsed my bill to date is Amnesty International. Perhaps the writer feels his critique of my bill need not be informed by the position of one of the most reputable human rights groups in the world.

Finally, Scahill attempts to deduce that my bill represents the interests of Blackwater simply because that company is headquartered in my home state of North Carolina. Aside from the fact that nearly 200 miles separate Blackwater from my Congressional district, I respectfully suggest that Scahill infuse a bit more substance into his critique. A deduction like that is akin to assuming that a football fan from New York City roots for the Bills. Give me a break.

A good reporter, before casting aspersions on a piece of legislation, might try reading the bill first—something Scahill seems not to have done. There is no hidden agenda in my legislation; in fact, I encourage anyone with interest to read it because it stands on its own merits as a responsible, viable, enforceable effort to rein in contracting abuse. DAVID E. PRICE

Member of Congress

SCAHILL REPLIES

Boston

■ That the subject of privatized warfare is breaking into the halls of Congress is a welcome development, and David Price is one of the few Representatives who have taken on this issue. Price's legislation will look great on paper and give the appearance of accountability, something the mercenary industry very much desires. Price says it is "certainly news to me" that the industry has strongly endorsed his legislation. Here are the facts: The mercenary trade association, the International Peace Operations Association (of which Blackwater is a leading member), has endorsed the expansion of the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act—essentially Price's plan—since 2004. It continues to push for it and not the military court-martial system to be the law of the land. In fact, after an industry-sponsored forum with Price in February, the IPOA released a statement calling the expansion of MEJA "the most cogent approach to ensuring greater contractor accountability in the battle space." I question the mercenary industry's motives for this, not Price's. This support should give people pause.

Let's look at the broader picture: The US military has enough trouble policing the activities of 130,000 soldiers subject to the court-martial system. Is it realistic to believe that an FBI "field investigative unit" in Iraq, as Price proposes, is going to effectively monitor the activities of 126,000 contractors? Under Price's legislation, FBI agents are somehow going to be running around Iraq, perhaps the most dangerous war zone in the world, to track down private contractors who have committed crimes. Who will protect the investigators? How will evidence be gathered inside Iraq? Given that the government and military seem unable or unwilling to even count contractors, how will their activities be effectively monitored?

Moreover, in light of the recent US Attorney scandal, there are serious questions about the integrity of the Justice Department and the insertion of political agendas into investigations. How can we have faith that crimes in Iraq will be investigated, particularly if they involve personnel from politically connected companies like Blackwater and Halliburton? Also, this legislation would require even more US personnel to deploy in Iraq. Is this really the Democrats' best plan?

Tens of thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—of contractors have passed through Iraq since March 2003. Only two have been indicted for crimes, and neither was an armed contractor. (In fact, one was charged with possession of child porn on a computer at Abu Ghraib.) There have been no indictments of contractors for crimes against Iraqis, despite many credible reports of such abuses. Why?

Price challenges me to offer a better solution. I humbly submit the following: Until an effective system of oversight and law is implemented, the Bush Administration should not be permitted to deploy shadow armies of unaccountable contractors, thousands of whom are heavily armed and woefully unmonitored, in any war zone. This system benefits no one but the companies profiting from the war and the Administration, which uses them to mask the human toll of the occupation and escalate the conflict behind the backs of the American people. Price's legislation may have been born of the most sincere motives, but I think it will

(Continued on Page 24)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 PELOSI AND DIPLOMACY

4 MAKING ELECTIONS FAIR
Ari Berman

5 THE FRENCH CONNECTION
Jordan Stancil

6 TESTING TIME FOR NIGERIA
John Ghazvinian

8 HISS IN HISTORY
Victor Navasky

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
On McCain's Trip to the Market…
Calvin Trillin

10 BEAT THE DEVIL
The Ho Industry
Alexander Cockburn

ARTICLES

11 THE ESTABLISHMENT RETHINKS GLOBALIZATION
William Greider

16 THE COMING PARTY REALIGNMENT
Economic anxiety is driving the change.
Lawrence Goodwyn

20 *SUN*-RISE IN NEW YORK
Conservatives love the money-losing paper.
Scott Sherman

BOOKS & THE ARTS

25 DALRYMPLE: The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857
Gyan Prakash

30 GREEN: Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869–1899
Maya Jasanoff

34 KEHLMANN: Measuring the World
Mark M. Anderson

Cover by Gene Case & Stephen Kling/Avenging Angels; illustrations by R.O. Blechman and Tim Robinson

EDITORIALS

Pelosi and Diplomacy

Once upon a time, Republicans believed in diplomacy. They spoke with enemies. Recall Richard Nixon: As President, he negotiated with the Soviets, the Chinese and the North Vietnamese, who were shooting at US troops at the time. Nowadays, the Bush Administration too often dismisses diplomacy and, when it does, is cheered on by neoconservatives and conservatives who misguidedly equate communication with weakness. The recent hullabaloo about House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Syria is illustrative. The White House and its allies denounced Pelosi for daring to speak to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, claiming she was undermining US policy. (Curiously, Bush didn't slam three Republican House members who days earlier had conferred with Assad or lambaste GOP Representative Dave Hobson, part of the Pelosi delegation, or GOP Representative Darrell Issa, who met with Assad the day after Pelosi left Damascus.)

Yet Pelosi, who affirmed US policy toward Syria in her conversation with Assad, was merely following the advice of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, co-chaired by former Republican Secretary of State James Baker, which suggested that to find peace in Iraq it would be wise to try to deal with Iran and Syria. The Administration took a slight step in that direction when US diplomats attended a March security conference in Baghdad with Syrian and Iranian envoys. And for the moment—much to the consternation of conservatives—it is giving diplomacy a chance on North Korea. But when it comes to the big picture, the Administration still prefers bullying and threats of military action to the hard work of talking and negotiating. Iran's defiant announcement that it has begun enriching uranium on an industrial scale shows that this approach hasn't paid off.

Bush and his cowboy allies argue that America must isolate Iran and Syria. But because of Bush's stunning misadventure in Iraq, the United States needs more, not fewer, channels of communication in that region. And with a greater US military presence in the Persian Gulf, the odds of an unintentional clash between Iran and the United States increase. Imagine what might have been triggered—perhaps accidentally—had Iranian military vessels surrounded an American ship instead of a British one. In the British-Iranian face-off, Prime Minister Tony Blair achieved the release of the British hostages without resorting to threats or force. Yet the big-stick crowd in Washington derided Blair.

On the day Pelosi was in Damascus, former President Jimmy Carter received the Ridenhour Courage Prize (co-sponsored by The Nation Institute and the Fertel Foundation) for his efforts to speak candidly about the Middle East. Carter noted that day that the Bush Administration had earlier ordered him not to visit Syria—a request he had respected. But he supported Pelosi's trip, and in his acceptance speech he cited the times he had met with "leaders who were considered to be international villains or criminals or pariahs." He added, "My meeting with them, sometimes working with them, was necessary if destruction and suffering of war and the persecution of human rights abuses were to be ended or prevented."

Bush does not believe in the power of negotiation and compromise—as evidenced even by his dealings with Congressional Democrats. He recently awarded recess appointments to nominees opposed by legislators, gratuitously poking the Democrats in the eye when he should be working with them, especially to resolve the mess in Iraq. Bush has isolated himself on domestic and foreign matters. We need more diplomacy—at home and abroad.

For more, see Katrina vanden Heuvel's recent post about Pelosi's trip on her Editor's Cut blog (www.thenation.com) and hear Jimmy Carter's remarks (www.c-span.org/rss/video.asp?MediaID=30393).

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COMMENT

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Making Elections Fair

The modern campaign finance system is badly broken, if not on the verge of total collapse. The 2008 cycle promises to be the most expensive in history, as the fundraising numbers in the first quarter of this year demonstrated. One presidential contender after another is declining matching funds and raising as much money as possible. Michael Toner, former head of the Federal Election Commission, predicts that the two major party nominees will raise $500 million apiece. John McCain has abandoned the cause of reform he once so loudly trumpeted; Barack Obama refers to the amount of money he's raising as "obscene."

But these disturbing developments, rather than discouraging reformers, have only strengthened their resolve. The answer to the current problem is more, not less, public funding, they say. That's why Illinois's senior Senator, Dick Durbin—the number-two Democrat in the Senate—has introduced the first bipartisan bill to publicly finance federal races, modeled after successful "clean election" laws at the state and local levels. Durbin's bill won't stop the presidential money chase. But it would transform the way Congressional races are fought and won, laying down the most significant campaign finance reforms to date. Obama has signed on as a co-sponsor, calling the bill "a very intelligent approach."

The Congressional picture is almost as bad as the presidential marathon—and affects far more candidates. The cost of a top-tier Senate campaign has doubled in the past four years, with an average total price tag of $34 million for the two leading candidates. The beneficiaries of such an arrangement are the lobbyists, wealthy individuals and corporations that can write check after check, and incumbents, who rarely face stiff challenges anymore. Other winners include the TV stations and campaign consultants who make big bucks off campaign advertising. "We are stuck in a terrible, corrupting system," Durbin says. Politicians, Representative Barney Frank likes to joke, "are the only human beings in the world who are expected to take thousands of dollars from perfect strangers on important matters and not be affected by it."

The McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002 was advertised by proponents as a sweeping change. But unlimited soft-money contributions to parties, which the bill banned, simply gave way to larger checks and murky 527s, like the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which can pocket limitless amounts. In light of recent Congressional scandals, Durbin and his GOP co-sponsor, Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter, believe it's time to address the core problem. After eighteen months of consultation with groups like Public Campaign, Common Cause and the Brennan Center, Durbin introduced the Fair Elections Now Act in March. John Tierney, Todd Platts and Raúl Grijalva unveiled a companion bill in the House.

The proposal is quite simple: If Congressional candidates raise enough $5 donations to prove they are viable and competitive (that number is 11,500 in Durbin's home state, according to a formula in the bill), they can qualify for public funds in the primary and general election. The need to spend hours cold-calling rich donors and shmoozing with lobbyists and CEOs at closed-door fundraisers would drastically diminish. Durbin knows this world well. As

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a top Democrat, he has to collect money for his colleagues as well as for his own re-election race in '08. "I can't tell you how much time we spend fundraising," he says. "People would be surprised, if not shocked," if they knew.

Clean election laws came into effect for races in Arizona and Maine in 2000. The road to reform, however, has often been bumpy. After the success in those two states, poorly worded clean election ballot measures were defeated in Missouri, Oregon and, most recently, California, with the opposition successfully bankrolled by big business. Yet in the wake of the Jack Abramoff affair and local scandals, the climate may be changing. Connecticut, North Carolina, New Mexico, New Jersey, Iowa and Maryland have passed or are considering various clean election bills.

Theodore Roosevelt first floated the idea of public financing in his 1907 State of the Union address. Durbin-Specter is not the first federal public financing bill to be unveiled. Senators John Kerry and the late Paul Wellstone introduced a similar plan in 1997 that went nowhere. It took seven years to approve McCain-Feingold. Durbin says that passing his bill, over the objections of TV stations and well-funded incumbents, among others, will be even tougher. "We're not talking about part of the system," Durbin says. "We're talking about *the* system." ARI BERMAN

Ari Berman, a Nation *contributing writer, is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.*

The French Connection

"The American model" plays a big role in European domestic economic debates, with business school types convinced that the streets really are paved with gold in the land of Ronald Reagan, and the left certain that modern America is a kind of Dickensian inferno. The leading candidates in France's presidential election (held, in two rounds, on April 22 and May 6) have followed this pattern in their rhetoric, with conservative Nicolas Sarkozy and Socialist Ségolène Royal respectively praising and criticizing the US economy.

At other times in history, however, these roles were reversed. During the American Civil War, French liberals supported the Union, while monarchists around Europe were drooling at the possible demise of the American experiment. Civil War historian James McPherson, in an essay on European responses to the conflict, quotes French reformer Edgar Quinet's 1862 statement that Napoleon III wanted to "destroy democracy in the United States…because in order for Napoleonic ideas to succeed, it is absolutely indispensable that this vast republic disappear from the face of the earth."

Today, the transatlantic discussion is not about "Napoleonic ideas" but rather about the viability of the welfare state in an era of globalization. And just as European republicans of the nineteenth century depended on the success of the American experiment in democracy, so today American progressives would be enormously helped if Europe can get social justice and globalization right. Thus, while the French are debating the American model, Americans should be taking a look at what's happening to the French one.

It's all too easy to see Europe as a kind of welfare-state Alamo, desperately trying to hold on to the gains workers and the middle class made during the twentieth century. European leaders' rhetoric justifies that impression. However, the reality is much more complicated. As columnist Jean-Louis Andreani argued recently in *Le Monde*, EU governments, "including that of France, are supporting, or at least permitting, a policy that resists on principle anything that's public in favor of whatever is private. But this ideological shift is never admitted—or submitted to a clear decision by voters." It's like a Reagan revolution without a Reagan.

Nicolas Sarkozy is not a European Reagan, but some of his plans seem drawn from the Republican playbook. He proposes, for instance, a cut in the estate tax and the abolition of a surcharge on large fortunes. He also proposes other tax cuts, which he promises will put more money in the average person's pocket—paid for in part by not replacing half of all retiring civil service workers. You can almost hear him saying, "It's not the government's money—it's your money!" In addition, the at-will employment system the government tried to begin installing last year (but had to retract in the face of public protest) remains a centerpiece of Sarkozy's program. This is all part of his stated goal of bringing what he describes approvingly as Anglo-Saxon flexibility to France, a project that makes him the darling of the business associations even as his law-and-order image allows him simultaneously to cull votes from the populist far right.

And where is the fearsome French left in all this? It's not exactly AWOL, but neither is it providing a robust challenge to the current rightward drift. Ségolène Royal is running on a platform that is more Clinton than Roosevelt. She proposes some spending increases, but by far the biggest items on her wish list are for Blairite, New Economy–type programs such as more support for scientific research and improvements in training and education to help French workers compete in a globalized economy. But she says nary a word about the trade and financial flows that cause these workers to need help in the first place.

The only parts of the Socialist program that try to address these problems are proposals to give tax credits to companies that reinvest profits in France and to make companies reimburse the government for tax breaks if they turn around and send abroad the jobs the tax breaks were designed to subsidize. Royal's program also calls for raising the minimum wage and increasing pension benefits for the lowest-income retirees. But all these proposals are well within what most Democrats in the United States and even some Republicans could support.

These timid suggestions come at a time when French voters are obsessed with economic insecurity, and many hallmarks of the French model seem to be crumbling. For instance, even the paid vacation, the most emblematic achievement of Léon Blum's Popular Front government of the 1930s, is no longer what it once was. In 2004 one-third of French people didn't take any vacation, largely for financial or work reasons, according to a report released last summer by the nation's statistical agency.

Sarkozy has said that he profits from this "absence of economic questions," but the Socialists have also lost voters to François

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COMMENT

Bayrou, a conservative trying to ply the middle ground, who has surprisingly strong support. Bayrou has tried to distance himself from Sarkozy by warning that the United States is "not a model." But he doesn't propose any major new initiatives that might actually shore up the French model he says he prefers.

If none of this seems to matter to the fate of progressive politics in the United States, consider this: If a kind of Reaganomics came to dominate Europe, there would no longer be any major Western economy to demonstrate the viability of the social market. An ever-growing list of health, pension and education "reforms"—all tending in the direction of greater inequality—would eviscerate Europe's societal model. The welfare-state Alamo would fall, and American progressives would lose a powerful, living argument that—for all its flaws—still gives the lie to the Bush/Norquist vision of the so-called "ownership society." Something to think about as French voters go to the polls. JORDAN STANCIL

Jordan Stancil is a PhD candidate in history at the Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) in Paris.

Testing Time for Nigeria

On April 14, citizens of Africa's most populous country will go to the polls to elect state governors. One week later they'll also elect their senators, representatives and a new president. If all goes smoothly, it will mark the first time in Nigeria's tumultuous history that one democratically elected civilian government has handed over power to another. Rarely on Africa's long and troubled road to democracy has there been a more important turning point.

With a population of 130 million (one in six Africans is a Nigerian) and one of the continent's largest and most experienced armies, Nigeria plays an important peacekeeping role in the troubled West African subregion. It also happens to be home to some of the greatest reserves of hydrocarbons outside the Middle East. A key source of oil for Europe and North America for more than forty years, and the site of major operations by oil companies including Shell and Exxon, Nigeria is the fifth-largest supplier of oil to the United States. Both the United States and Britain—the former colonial power—treat it (along with South Africa) as an anchor of their Africa policy.

Sadly, though, the initial indications regarding the elections have not been promising. President Olusegun Obasanjo, a darling of Western business interests, has appeared reluctant to leave office; last year he attempted, somewhat ham-handedly, to engineer a movement to amend the Constitution's clause on term limits. The power grab failed, but Obasanjo has left Nigerians in no doubt about his intentions to stage-manage the country from beyond the political grave. At its nominating convention in December, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) chose a relative unknown—Katsina governor Umaru Yar'Adua, a staunch Obasanjo loyalist—as its presidential candidate, bypassing several far more prominent figures in the party. Yar'Adua has insisted he will be his own man, but few believe him.

Nor has Nigeria's recent experience with elections been particularly encouraging. For much of its turbulent forty-seven-year history as an independent nation, Nigeria has been ruled by a succession of iron-fisted, incompetent and frequently corrupt military juntas. In 1999 constitutional democracy was finally restored. But Nigerians have become dangerously disillusioned with democracy. In 1999 and 2003, elections in many parts of the country were decided by widespread intimidation and threats of violence, with politicians hiring armed militias to bully voters into turning out for them. Thousands of people died in the process.

Then there is corruption. Some thirty-one of Nigeria's thirty-six state governors are currently under investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for financial wrongdoing. The EFCC was created by Obasanjo as a way to demonstrate his seriousness about combating corruption, but critics have grumbled that Obasanjo's enemies are the only ones investigated.

As if all this were not enough, Nigerians have also been treated to the bizarre spectacle of open warfare between Obasanjo and his vice president, Atiku Abubakar. The two men barely speak, and in 2006, at Obasanjo's behest, the ruling PDP voted to suspend Abubakar from the party. Abubakar has been attempting to mount a bid for the presidency with a rival party, but when Nigeria's electoral commission published the list of candidates eligible to run for president, his name was absent. He mounted a legal challenge to be allowed to stand, but ten days before the vote, it was still unclear whether this would happen.

Meanwhile, at least 100 people have been killed in election-related violence since November, several gubernatorial candidates have been assassinated under mysterious circumstances, and after one presidential candidate died (apparently of natural causes), confusion broke out over whether the elections would still go ahead. Cynics have suggested that constant rumors about the election being postponed or even canceled have played neatly into the hands of the PDP. In town after town, opposition activists have kept a low profile after hearing rumors of a cancellation, only to see the PDP sweep through with a giant rally the next day.

CALVIN TRILLIN

On John McCain's Much-Ridiculed Attempt to Use His Shorja Market Visit as Proof That Baghdad Is Being Pacified

He said he browsed, but this he didn't say:
Security enclosed him in a bubble.
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COMMENT

Regardless of who ultimately takes control, the biggest challenge to Nigeria's long-term success and stability will remain the ongoing struggle for control of the country's formidable oil revenue, and the stubborn insurgency it has created in the oil-rich Niger Delta. There, decades of frustration over environmental destruction and the unequal distribution of oil money have created an ugly and intractable conflict. Rival gangs cruise the mangrove swamps in speedboats bristling with military hardware, foreign oil workers are kidnapped on a weekly basis, oil company installations are attacked and vandalized, and crude oil is stolen under cover of night and sold to raise funds for ethnic militias. At last count, some 10 to 20 percent of Nigeria's daily oil production was shut down because of the volatile conflicts in the delta.

Thanks in part to the high price of oil, Nigeria is in the best position in thirty years to move ahead economically and to deal with difficult political issues. But whether those who will emerge as winners in this election are up to the task of overseeing these changes remains to be seen. With a boisterous press, a sophisticated middle class and at least the institutions of democracy in place, Nigerians have every reason to believe that the time is ripe—finally—for their country to become one of Africa's powerhouses. Unfortunately, though, they have been disappointed more than once before. JOHN GHAZVINIAN

John Ghazvinian, a visiting fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, is the author of the just-published Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil.

Hiss in History

In 1951 literary critic Leslie Fiedler wrote, "It is time, many of us feel, to forget the whole business: the prison doors have closed [on Alger Hiss]; let us consider the question also closed."

For the next fifty-five years commentators, critics, journalists and historians proclaimed the case closed—most recently (i.e., ten years ago) with the release of the Venona decrypts, including one said to be "the final nail in Hiss's coffin": Venona cable 1822, which contained a twenty-five-years-after-the-fact footnote saying that a Soviet agent code-named ALES was "probably Alger Hiss."

This is the gazillionth "final" nail in Hiss's coffin, but no matter. Over the years the pendulum of the Hiss case has swung this way and that with only one certainty: This is a case that will not die. It will not go away. The cold war is over, but the symbolic cold war lives on. In early April New York University's Center for the United States and the Cold War sponsored a daylong conference on "Alger Hiss and History," and events before, during and, presumably, after the conference help explain why.

Even before the conference got under way it was attacked (in the *New York Sun* and on *The New Republic*'s website) for having more pro- than anti-Hiss participants (conflict-of-interest alert: I gave the keynote address) and for not having Allen Weinstein and Sam Tanenhaus, who have written the most important anti-Hiss books on the case. (Weinstein and Tanenhaus, as it happens, were both invited but couldn't—or wouldn't—attend.)

Three things seemed to me newsworthy about the NYU conference:

§ For the first time ever, Alger Hiss's stepson, Timothy Hobson, who lived in the Hiss household until he was 14, including the period when Chambers claimed to be a regular visitor, told his story publicly. Now 80, Hobson said, "I know Chambers was lying, because I was there and he wasn't." (He also blamed Hiss's defense counsel for not calling him as a witness. He had been less than honorably discharged from the Navy as a homosexual, and Hiss's attorneys thought the stigma would cast a negative shadow over the defense. Also, Hiss had told his stepson he would rather go to prison himself than see him attacked and publicly humiliated.)

§ Kai Bird, the Pulitzer Prize–winning co-author of *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, and Svetlana Chervonnaya, a Russian researcher, in a précis of a 17,000-word paper, "Who is ALES?" (soon to be published online in *The American Scholar*), argued that going by Venona, Hiss could not have been ALES because, among other reasons, Hiss was publicly and visibly in Washington when his US-based control had ALES in Mexico. The paper also argues that another person, Wilder Foote, an assistant to the Secretary of State, who, like Hiss, traveled from Yalta to Moscow and was in Mexico during the period in question, better fits the ALES profile.

§ Jeff Kisseloff, drawing on new research courtesy of FOIA, documented that Hede Massing, the only witness besides Chambers who testified that Hiss had been a member of the underground, at first omitted Hiss from her story, introducing him into her account only after Chambers produced the pumpkin film and publicly accused him of espionage. Her husband was under threat of deportation at the time, and she had lied in several previous interviews. Kisseloff makes the case that her testimony against Hiss was the result of FBI prompting.

If Bird and Chervonnaya are right, their finding complicates but does not resolve the case. If Hobson and Kisseloff are right, their new information goes to the heart of the case. Either way, to paraphrase the late Alistair Cooke (who wrote *A Generation on Trial*), not just Alger Hiss but all those historians who share what they like to call the consensus are on trial, for we live under a system of opinion trusteeship, and the rest of us rely on contemporary historians to get our news about the past.

The consensus historians have tended to focus on information that on its face is incriminatory (like Venona cable 1822) but have seemed to look the other way when it comes to evidence that on its face is exculpatory (like another Venona cable, which mentions Hiss by name, when in the world of Venona, spies are mentioned only by code name). Will the consensus historians study this new information and attempt to integrate it into their understanding of the case, or will they reflexively ignore and dismiss it? Check *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard* for early warning signals.

By the end of the day it seemed obvious that anyone who would understand the New Deal, McCarthyism and/or the postwar international order would do well to come to terms with the case that refuses to die. VICTOR NAVASKY

For the full text of Victor Navasky's speech, go to www.thenation.com.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Ho Industry

It's suddenly news that Don Imus shores up his ratings with racist cracks at blacks and Hispanics? Only now, by insulting the women athletes of Rutgers as "nappy-headed ho's," has he crossed the Rubicon of racism and the shout has at last gone up, Has Imus no decency? It's like announcing Bluebeard veered into unforgivable moral excess when he knocked off wife number five.

With the full sanction of his employers—primarily CBS and NBC—the man's been at it for years, along with his sidekicks, Bernard McGuirk and Sid Rosenberg. Ishmael Reed has a brisk résumé of choice moments on *Imus in the Morning* in a piece in *End Times*, a very fine new book on the death of the Fourth Estate written mostly by Jeffrey St. Clair and myself.

"On any day," Reed wrote, "you might find Bernard McGuirk, the man who, according to *60 Minutes*, Imus hired to do 'nigger jokes,' doing a lame imitation of New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, using a plantation-type dialect. Blacks who are satirized by McGuirk and others are usually displayed as committing malapropisms…. Black athletes are referred to as 'knuckle draggers.'"

"I replay Don Imus as much as I can," the intrepid Reed wrote, "because his putrid racist offerings are said to represent the secret thinking of the cognoscenti. Maybe that's why journalists like Jeff Greenfield and others admire him so much. He says what they think in private." True enough. Those legions of mostly white men in the Chris Matthews genre, described as "political analysts" or "political strategists," all adore Imus. (The commentators on the Imus affair are 90 percent men too. I guess women are disqualified because they might be prejudiced.) One such Imus fan, Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*, made his continuing support an issue of principle, using the pulpit of Tucker Carlson's show:

> **ALTER**: I will continue to go on the show. I think what he said was racist, not to mention being unfunny and stupid, but if you don't believe he should be fired, then you can't call for a boycott, because a boycott would amount to the same thing as his being fired. If all of his guests, all of those senators in both parties, all the journalists all stopped going on, that would be the end of Imus. It would be.… So if you favor boycotting him, you favor the end of *Imus in the Morning*.

Thus does Alter—who obviously cherishes his sessions with the manly Imus crew—evolve the position that it is somehow a position of high moral principle, a courageous blow for free speech, to continue to go on *Imus*. Flaubert couldn't have topped this.

I call Reed "intrepid" because I've tried to watch Imus on MSNBC from time to time in recent years and have found the show far more boring than jewelry sales on QVC. Imus himself looks half-asleep most of the time, which is probably why he tried to offer his audience a quick snicker about the Rutgers girls—it was just an attempt to wake himself up. And indeed, like many of the hee-haw racists strewn across the cable dial and AM frequencies, he must be wondering why this time he got his tongue caught in the wringer. "Nappy-headed ho's"? What's so bad about that? Walk into a clothing store patronized by the younger multicultural set and "ho's" and "bitches" thunder from the loudspeakers.

But wisely, Imus is 100 percent in contrition mode. America, far more than other cultures, adores full-bore apologies leading to a full, low-interest-rate moral re-fi. Not believing in redemption, and schooled by Spinoza and Nietzsche, Europeans tend to take the position that remorse adds to the crime.

Imus's trip to Canossa on the Rev. Al Sharpton's radio program was a particularly rich session, with Imus sniveling that he was just trying "to be funny" and Reverend Al ushering on his daughter as a symbol of black womanhood defiled by Imus's "ho" talk. Imus could have probed the Rev about his statement on CNN a couple of years ago that, though he disapproves of misogyny, rappers have a First Amendment right to rap about violence and, presumably, ho's. But Imus passed up the chance, preferring to dwell on his war on sickle cell anemia, a disease he appears to think he alone has had the courage and moral stamina to confront from his ranch in New Mexico. This culminated in another wonderful exchange, this one between Imus and Brian Monroe of *Ebony*:

> **MONROE**: Let me be clear…. My magazine, *Ebony* magazine, has been writing and covering sickle cell anemia for decades now.… When you were still doing radio spots for used cars. I cannot let you——
>
> **IMUS**: I'm not going to sit here and let you insult me.… Don't talk about me doing used car commercials…. Let me tell you what—I will bet you I have slept in a house with more black children who were not related to me than you have.

In the end, despite the apologies and the groveling and the support of fans like Alter, MSNBC canceled its simulcast of Imus's radio show, though CBS merely gave him a two-week suspension. The culture czars at CBS don't want to lose Imus any more than they do their prescription drug ads. Ho's, Paxil… it's all music to the media company's cash registers.

And in the larger context—of Ann Coulter, of O'Reilly the Loofah King, of Limbaugh, of Cynthia Tucker and Juan Williams; of blacks paid by whites to dump on other blacks like Cynthia McKinney; of Chris Rock doling out F-words; of women-dissing rappers—one listens to the fuss about Imus and thinks, OK, but this is only one tiny square in our dirty national quilt. We live in a racist, profit-driven culture that is getting more degraded by the hour.

War is at the apex of that degradation, and these ceremonies of degradation are an integral part of the war machine. Back in February Imus snarled into his mic, "It might be good to start with somebody who is willing to take three big ones and drop one on Mecca, one on Jedda and one on Saudi—one on Riyadh." No one asked him to apologize for that one. Take that, you ragheads. ■

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ARTICLES

The Establishment Rethinks Globalization

WILLIAM GREIDER

The church of global free trade, which rules American politics with infallible pretensions, may have finally met its Martin Luther. An unlikely dissenter has come forward with a revised understanding of globalization that argues for thorough reformation. This man knows the global trading system from the inside because he is a respected veteran of multinational business. His ideas contain an explosive message: that what established authorities teach Americans about global trade is simply wrong—disastrously wrong for the United States.

Martin Luther was a rebellious priest challenging the dictates of a corrupt church hierarchy. Ralph Gomory, on the other hand, is a gentle-spoken technologist, trained as a mathematician and largely apolitical. He does not set out to overthrow the establishment but to correct its deeper fallacies. For many years Gomory was a senior vice president at IBM. He helped manage IBM's expanding global presence as jobs and high-tech production were being dispersed around the world.

The experience still haunts him. He decided, in retirement, that he would dig deeper into the contradictions. Now president of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, he knew something was missing in the "pure trade theory" taught by economists. If free trade is a win-win proposition, Gomory asked himself, then why did America keep losing?

The explanations he has developed sound like pure heresy to devout free traders. But oddly enough, Gomory's analysis is a good fit with what many ordinary workers and uncredentialed critics (myself included) have been arguing for some years. An important difference is that Gomory's critique is thoroughly grounded in the orthodox terms and logic of conventional economics. That makes it much harder to dismiss. Given his career at IBM, nobody is going to call Ralph Gomory a "protectionist."

He did not nail his "theses" to the door of the Harvard economics department. Instead, he wrote a slender book—*Global Trade and Conflicting National Interests*—in collaboration with respected economist William Baumol, former president of the American Economic Association. Published seven years ago, the book languished in academic obscurity and until recently was ignored by Washington policy circles.

I asked Gomory if his former colleagues from the corporate world quarrel with his provocative message. "Most of them have never heard it," he said. "It's a pretty new message." He has discussed his reform ideas with some CEOs, "who said, Well, maybe we could do that. Others couldn't have disagreed more strongly."

Now Gomory is attempting to reeducate the politicians in Congress. He has gained greater visibility lately because he has been joined by a group of similarly concerned corporate executives called the Horizon Project. Its leader, Leo Hindery, former CEO of the largest US cable company and a player in Democratic politics, shares Gomory's foreboding about the destructive impact of globalization on American prosperity. Huge losses are ahead—10 million jobs or more—and Hindery fears time is running out on reform.

"We want to be a counter to the Hamilton Project," Hindery explains. "They have a sense of stasis that is more benign than I have. I don't think this is all going to work out." The Hamilton policy group was launched last year by former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin to make sure the laissez-faire trade doctrine known as Rubinomics continues to dominate the Democratic Party. "We're never going to have the status of Bob Rubin," Hindery concedes. "But we're not chopped liver either. We have respect-

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THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.

Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

able business careers. You can't tell Ralph Gomory that he is 'smoke and mirrors,' because he wrote the book."

Gomory's critique has great political potential because it provides what the opponents of corporate-led globalization have generally lacked: a comprehensive intellectual platform for arguing that the US approach to globalization must be transformed to defend the national interest. Still, it will take politicians of courage to embrace his ideas and act on them. Gomory's political solutions are as heretical as his economic analysis.

At IBM back in the 1980s, Gomory watched in awe as Japan and other Asian nations captured high-tech industrial sectors in which US companies held commanding advantage. IBM invented the disk drive, then dropped out of the disk-drive business, unable to compete profitably. Gomory marveled at Singapore, a tiny city-state, as it lured American manufacturers with low-wage labor, capital subsidies and tax breaks. The US companies turned Singapore into a global center for semiconductor production.

"It was an unforgettable transformation," Gomory remembers. "And it was pretty frightening.

"The offer that many Asian countries will give to American companies is essentially this: 'Come over here and enhance our GDP. If you are here our people will be building disk drives, for example, instead of something less productive. In return, we'll help you with the investment, with taxes, maybe even with wages. We'll make sure you make a profit.' This works for both sides: the American company gets profits, the host country gets GDP. However, there is another effect beyond the benefits for those two parties—high-value-added jobs leave the U.S."

China and India, he observes, are now doing this on a large scale. Microsoft and Google opened rival research centers in Beijing. Intel announced a new, $2.5 billion semiconductor plant that will make it one of China's largest foreign investors. China's industrial transformation is no longer about making shirts and shoes, as some free-trade cheerleaders still seem to believe. It is about capturing the most advanced processes and products.

The multinationals' overseas deployment of capital and technology, Gomory explains, is the core of how some very poor developing nations are able to ratchet up their technological prowess, take over advanced industrial sectors and rapidly expand their share in global trade—all with the help of US companies and finance, as they roam the world in search of better returns.

The Gomory-Baumol book describes this as "a divergence of interests" between multinational firms and their home country. "This overseas investment decision may then prove to be very good for that multinational firm," they write. "But there remains the question: Is the decision good for its own country?" In many cases, yes. If the firm is locating low-skilled industrial production in a very poor country, Americans get cheaper goods, trade expands for both sides and the result is "mutual gain." But the trading partners enter a "zone of conflict" if the poor nation develops greater capabilities and assumes the production of more advanced goods. Then, the authors explain, "the newly developing partner *becomes harmful* to the more industrialized country." The firm's self-interested success "can constitute an actual loss of national income for the company's home country."

American multinationals, as principal actors in this transfer

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of wealth-generating productive capacity, are distinctively free to make the decisions for themselves without interference from government. They want profit and future consumer markets. Their home country wants to maintain a highly productive high-wage economy. Without recognizing it, the two are pulling in opposite directions—the "divergence of interests" most US politicians ignore, evidently believing church doctrine over visible reality.

The Gomory-Baumol book explains the dynamics with charts and equations for economists to study. For the rest of us, it is easier to follow Gomory's personal explanation of changing fortunes among trading nations. "What made America much wealthier than the Asian nations in the first place?" Gomory asks. "We invested alongside our workers. Our workers dug ditches with backhoes. The workers in underdeveloped countries dug ditches with shovels. We had great big plants with a few people in them, which is the same thing. We knew how, through technology and investment, to make our workers highly productive. It wasn't that they went to better schools, then or now, and I don't know how much schooling it takes to run a backhoe.

Some nations do indeed become 'losers' in the trading system. Gomory fears the United States is now one of them—starting to go downhill.

"The situation today is that the companies have discovered that using modern technology they can do all that overseas and pay less for labor and then import product and services back into the United States. So what we're doing now is competing shovel to shovel. The people in many countries are being equipped with as good a shovel or backhoe as our people have. Very often we are helping them make the transition. We're making it person-to-person competition, which it never was before and which we cannot win. Because their people will be paid a third, a quarter of what our people are paid. And it's unreasonable to think you can educate our people so well that they can produce four times as much in the United States."

As this shift of productive assets progresses, the downward pressure on US wages will thus continue and intensify. Free-trade believers insist US workers can defend themselves by getting better educated, but Gomory suggests these believers simply don't understand the economics. "Better education can only help," he explains. "The question is where do you put your technology and knowledge and investment? These other countries understand that. They have understood the following divergence: What countries want and what companies want are different."

The implication is this: If nothing changes in how globalization currently works, Americans will be increasingly exposed to downward pressure on incomes and living standards. "Yes," says Gomory. "There are many ways to look at it, all of which reach the same conclusion."

I ask Gomory what he would say to those who believe this is a just outcome: Americans become less rich, others in the world become less poor. That might be "a reasonable personal choice," he agrees. "But that isn't what the people in this country are being told. No one has said to us: 'You're probably a little too rich and these other folks are a little too poor. Why don't we even it out?' Instead, what we usually hear is: 'It's going to be good for everyone. In the long run we're going to get richer with globalization.'"

Gomory and Baumol are elaborating a fundamental point sure to make many economists (and political leaders) sputter and choke. Contrary to dogma, the losses from trade are not confined to the "localized pain" felt by displaced workers who lose jobs and wages. In time, the accumulating loss of a country's productive base can injure the broader national interest—that is, everyone's economic well-being.

"Our objective," Baumol told a policy conference last summer, "is to show how outsourcing can indeed reduce the share of benefits of trade, not only for those who lose their jobs and suffer a direct reduction in wages but can wind up making the average American worse off than he or she would have been."

The conventional win-win assurances, they explain, are facile generalizations that ignore the complexity of the trading system—the myriad differences in country-to-country relationships and the vast realm of government actions and policy interventions designed to shape the outcomes. "Many of our 'dismal science' colleagues speak unguardedly as though they believe free trade cannot fail, no matter what," Baumol said.

Some nations, in other words, do indeed become "losers." Gomory fears the United States is now one of them—starting to go downhill. When he and Baumol wrote their book, they figured US trade relations with China and India produced "mutual gain" for both ends. The United States got cheaper goods, China and India got jobs and a start at industrialization. But the rapid improvements in those two nations during the past decade, Gomory thinks, are putting the United States in the bind where their gain becomes our loss.

Essentially, the terms of trade have changed as more and more value-added production has shifted from the United States to its poorer trading partners. America, he explains, becomes increasingly dependent, buying from abroad more and more of what its citizens consume and producing relatively less at home. US incomes stagnate as the high-wage jobs disappear and US exports become a smaller share of the world total.

The persistent offshoring of domestic production is leading to a perverse consequence: The United States finds itself paying more for imports. The production that originally moved offshore to get low-wage labor and cheaper goods is now claiming a larger and larger share of national income, as the growing trade deficits literally subtract from US domestic growth. "All the stuff you were already importing from them becomes more expensive," Gomory explains. "That's why you can start going downhill—because you pay more for what you were previously getting." Put another way, one hour of US work no longer buys as many hours of Chinese work as it once did. China can suppress its domestic wages to keep selling more of its stuff, but that does not alter the fundamental imbalance in productive strength.

The US predicament is vividly reflected in the nation's swollen trade deficits, now running at nearly 7 percent of GDP every year. The country consumes more than it produces. It borrows heavily from trading partners, led by China, to pay for its

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"excess" consumption. This allows America to dodge—temporarily—a reckoning with its weakened condition, that is, falling living standards. But that will eventually occur, when Americans are compelled to reduce their consumption and pay off the overdue bills. Postponement will deepen the ultimate injury because, meanwhile, the trading partners will gain greater industrial capabilities, while US productive strength weakens further.

Americans can choose to blame China or disloyal multinationals, but the problem is grounded in US politics. The solution can be found only in Washington. China and other developing nations are pursuing national self-interest and doing what the system allows. In a way, so are the US multinationals. "I want to stress it's a system problem," Gomory says. "The directors are doing the job they're sworn to do. It's a system that says the companies have to have a sole focus on maximizing profit."

Gomory's proposed solution would change two big things (and many lesser ones). First, the US government must intervene unilaterally to cap the nation's swollen trade deficit and force it to shrink until balanced trade is achieved with our trading partners. The mechanics for doing this are allowed under WTO rules, though the emergency action has never been invoked by a wealthy nation, much less the global system's putative leader. Capping US trade deficits would have wrenching consequences at home and abroad but could force other nations to consider reforms in how the trading system now functions. That could include international rights for workers, which Gomory favors.

'I want to stress it's a system problem,' Gomory says. US corporate directors 'are doing the job they're sworn to do.'

Second, government must impose national policy direction on the behavior of US multinationals, directly influencing their investment decisions. Gomory thinks this can be done most effectively through the tax code. A reformed corporate income tax would penalize those firms that keep moving high-wage jobs and value-added production offshore while rewarding those that are investing in redeveloping the home country's economy.

US companies are not only free of national supervision but actively encouraged to offshore production by government policy and tax breaks. Other advanced economies have sophisticated national industrial policies, plus political and cultural pressures, that guide and discipline their multinationals, forcing them to adhere more closely to the national interest.

Neither of Gomory's fundamental policy reforms—balancing trade or imposing discipline on US multinationals—can work without the other. Both have to be done more or less at once. If the government taxed US multinational behavior without also capping imports, the firms would just head out the door. "That won't work," Gomory explains, "because you will say to the companies, 'This is how we're going to measure you.' And the corporations will say, 'Oh, no, you're not. I'm going overseas. I'm going to make my product over there and I'll send it back into the United States.' But if you insist on balanced trade, then the amount that's shipped in has to equal the amount that's shipped out by companies. If no companies do that, then nothing can be shipped in either. If you balance trade, you are going to develop internal companies that work the way you want." Public investment in new technologies and industries, I would add, may not achieve much either, if there is no guarantee that the companies will locate their new production in the United States.

Essentially, Gomory proposes to alter the profit incentives of US multinationals. If the government adds rules of behavior and enforces them through the tax code, companies will be compelled to seek profit in a different way—by adhering to the national interest and terms set by the US government. Other nations do this in various ways. Only the United States imagines the national interest doesn't require it.

In recent months Gomory and Leo Hindery of the Horizon Project have been calling on Congress with these big ideas and getting respectful audiences. The two met with some thirty Democratic senators and Congressional staffers from both parties. Senator Byron Dorgan, with co-sponsors like Sherrod Brown, Russell Feingold and even Hillary Clinton, has introduced several bills to confront the trade deficits.

Gomory's concept for multinational taxation is a tougher sell amid Washington lobbyists because it goes right to the bottom line of major US corporations. On the other hand, this proposal has stronger intuitive appeal for citizens, who reasonably ask why multinationals are allowed to undercut the national interest when they enjoy all the benefits of being "American" companies.

Hindery's group is advocating Congressional action to arrange a "national summit" on trade, where all these questions can be thrashed out. The political system has never really had an honest, open debate on globalization in the past thirty years. The dogmatic church of free trade—"free trade good, no trade bad"—wouldn't allow it. As more politicians grasp the meaning of Gomory's analysis, they should start demanding equal time for the heretics.

Gomory's vision of reformation actually goes beyond the trading system and America's economic deterioration. He wants to re-create an understanding of the corporation's obligations to society, the social perspective that flourished for a time in the last century but is now nearly extinct. The old idea was that the corporation is a trust, not only for shareholders but for the benefit of the country, the employees and the people who use the product. "That attitude was the attitude I grew up on in IBM," Gomory explains. "That's the way we thought—good for the country, good for the people, good for the shareholders—and I hope we will get back to it.… We should measure corporations by their impact on all their constituencies.

"So in my utopian dream, we decide what we want from the corporations and that's how they make a profit—by doing those things. Failing that, I would settle for the general realization of this divergence and let people argue it out."

Some older CEOs and board members at least listen to him sympathetically. "They have grandchildren," he says. "They wonder too what's going to happen to our grandchildren. You can't get a vote around the corporate board table about, Is this good for the grandchildren? But you can talk to them and they'll worry about it and say, Well, maybe we need to do something." ■

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Dr. Robert C. Solomon is the Quincy Lee Centennial Professor of Philosophy at The University of Texas. A recipient of both the Standard Oil Outstanding Teaching Award and the President's Associates Teaching Award, he is the author of more than a dozen books in philosophy and psychology.

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THE ENERGIZING MOMENTUM IS ECONOMIC—DRIVEN BY PUBLIC ANXIETY ACROSS AMERICA.

The Coming Party Realignment

LAWRENCE GOODWYN

Intransigence and myopia. The flowering of these habits within the GOP is driving the Democratic Party to clarity. And the potential for serious consequences is real. It is not enough to suggest that a big Democratic win is possible in 2008. Something far more strategic is at work: large-scale party realignment with historic implications.

TIM ROBINSON

None of this seems apparent, of course. Indeed, for a number of hopeful partisans, such a possibility seems beyond reason itself. Politics is assumed to be modulated through the inherited customs of the two major parties. Complacency and sloganeering are settled habits among Republicans. Clarity, on the other hand, can scarcely be called an ingrained cultural habit among Democrats. In the face of corporate saber-rattling, a fair degree of communal Democratic wilting is highly probable. This traditional analysis, while time-tested and even accurate as far as it goes, is leading to inside-the-Beltway conclusions that are superficial and obsolete.

Actually, very strong countervailing pressures are at work. But Americans are no longer well instructed about how to see them. Real life contains two elements of democratic politics that are rarely discussed in tandem—engaged popular aspiration (unidentified people out there in America) and cooperating elites (identifiable in Washington). Such a range of citizens is not routinely analyzed together because, politically, they are not assumed to be together. Instead, people find the nominal institutions of democracy, such as the US Congress, limping along in a decayed condition, insufficiently independent of lobbyists. The outlying population is also found limping, assumed to be insufficiently informed to act with relevance. Since everyone is affected by the surrounding culture in which they have been raised and to which they remain attached, the same decayed condition besets the reporters who cover it, the scholars who brood over it, the consultants who try to make a living handling it and the politicians who seek passable footing through it. To find some footing for ourselves, we need to catch the connections on those rare occasions when popular and elite modes of politics function at the same time and have serious ideas in concert. It does not happen often in history. But it happens. When it does, expectation can begin to replace resignation.

It is, in fact, beginning to happen now. Activity among people "out there" surfaced soon after the 2006 elections, first as a new way to think about political possibility—verified by the arrival in Congress of new majority leaders and new committee chairs; verified yet again by the weak GOP sidestep, early on, of any Senate debate on Iraq and, not least, through the investigative horizons richly confirmed by the perjury trial of Scooter Libby. Apart from this, in climes far from comfortable lobbyists, activists have organized petitions for local environmental laws even as people in midsize towns stepped up pressure for living-wage ordinances as benchmarks for all city workers. Indeed, agitation for a revived push for an Equal Rights Amendment, visible at local levels soon after the November election and at state levels in December, has now gathered momentum in both the House and Senate. This kind of politics is not about the next election; it is about people coming up for air and getting something done that has a chance to get done. Nor is this effort a magic bullet to dispatch globalization. It is not instant and it does not begin large-scale but emerges from the interaction of popular aspirations and cooperating elites. It is out there in America now—much more vividly than before the November elections. It will be expanding.

There are stages here, reciprocal sequences. Unfamiliar rhythms are apparent in the attentive but very reserved popular responses to the bevy of presidential aspirants. Popular input is also visible on the ground in Iraq, on the floor of the House of Representatives and in the interplay of the two. It is no accident that the first officeholder to speak publicly about the resentment American troops in Iraq feel toward the crowds of contractors harvesting profit from the war is Pennsylvania Representative John Murtha. A savvy old hand from a working-class region hurt by globalization, Murtha does not fit the liberal-conservative mold that frames Beltway insiderism. An ex-Marine, Murtha saw for himself the conjunction of soldier competence and discontent on his most recent trip to Baghdad. His Democratic colleagues in the House will follow his lead in finding an expeditious way out of Iraq—as they began to do soon after he first publicly announced his opposition to Bush's policy. Like Murtha, the boots on the ground in Iraq are responding to the reality they see around them. What soldiers are telling the latest visitors reveals how desperate things are. Talking to a reporter for the McClatchy newspapers, a 19-year-old private explains, "We can go get into a firefight and empty our ammo, but it doesn't accomplish much. This isn't our war—we're just in the middle." An officer's take: "To be honest, it's going to be like this for a long time to come, no matter what we do."

The Iraq disaster undermines the Republicans but will not in itself bring party realignment. Rather, the energizing momentum is economic—and it is driven by abiding public anxiety here in America. Ahead in Washington are the sharpest kinds of party divisions over domestic policy. The signals are everywhere. The new Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, began by mobilizing

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all 233 Democrats to co-sponsor the minimum-wage bill. On their first opportunity to decamp, eighty-two Republicans did so. The final tally—an early harbinger of the realigned future—was 315 to 116. After redistricting in response to the 2010 census, it does not seem out of line to envision something approaching a Democratic margin of 275 to 160. The path to these numbers travels through Social Security, the issue that, as Bush has already experienced, remains the third rail of American politics. Debate before the 2008 election should produce the first of many win-win options for the Democrats: Either enough GOP senators defect to protect themselves as well as Social Security, or they don't defect and boost their own vulnerability at the polls. Of forty-nine GOP-held Senate seats, twenty-one are up for grabs.

Beyond Social Security lies a decisive second issue: healthcare. A tangible start has already begun with the bill to end one of the greatest boondoggles in legislative history—the GOP ban on the government's right to negotiate prices with drug companies. It passed the House 255 to 170. With the drug lobby weighing in, Democratic partisans were pleased to see that all the no votes were cast by Republicans. More suggestive is the fact that a score of others broke ranks to support the Democrats—a move that reflects less an alteration of ideology than anxiety about surviving 2008. This will be a dicey time because by then Americans will know how much of their own family budgets and the nation's Treasury the Republican Party has brazenly transferred to pharmaceutical firms. Already put away in the House bank is the most important labor bill in a generation: the Employee Free Choice Act, designed to end the corporate reign of threats and job firings routinely visited upon all those trying to get a union at their workplace. The bill passed 241 to 185.

Meanwhile, the government has essentially been outsourced to corporate America. In a convenient bit of tidiness, most auditing tasks have been outsourced as well. Hired contractors guard the US Treasury by casting glances over ledgers provided by other contractors. This way of running the country carries arrogance to public levels never before seen. Meanwhile, the Libby verdict ground into the national psyche the entire structure of "lying America into war"—a venture that changed the way the world feels about Americans as a people. What more will surface by, say, June 2008? By November? Much fuel for realignment lurks here.

A comparative framework for the impending Democratic sweep can be found in the time in American history that most vividly corresponds to the present—a moment that materialized right after another Democratic breakthrough, seventy-seven years ago.

The time is 1930. Democrats have just found themselves in control of the House under conditions they did not create and could not have imagined even two years earlier. They have essentially been bystanders at the instant of their ascendancy. The decisive political fact is that something fundamental has gone terribly awry. The disaster has come upon the nation with great speed, the consequences have gotten more severe with every passing day and the President is doing nothing in response. Instead he makes pious speeches that depress people

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because they do not address reality. A testy minority has long seen him as a complacent man nursing a penchant for pomposity. To them, his posture comes across as disdain for the suffering of millions, not to mention the mounting anxiety of almost everybody else. He has begun to be hated by many people and is no longer trusted by most. The disaster that generates all this is called the Great Depression. The President who does not act but speaks in slogans is named Herbert Hoover. Though the Civil War had conferred great prestige on the Republican Party, suddenly, after many decades, grave peril looms.

The relationship between then and now is compelling. Every time Hoover extolled the curative powers of the free market, every time he wrapped himself in the red, white and blue of American prosperity, he verified the emptiness of his leadership. The American people had to endure a one-two punch: a self-undermining President, leaking support while trying to defend his immobility, and a docile party confined by its dazed need to be loyal to him. It took a while to play out publicly, but eventually the rhythm of an immobilized President and a party of straight men brought home to the population the depth of the trap they were in. But right after their breakthrough, Democrats could not by themselves drive home to a needy electorate the initiatives many hoped to enact. They did not yet have the aid of a cooperating President. Just as Iraq undermines George Bush in 2007, Hoover's inability to deal with reality in 1931 and '32 was seen by voters for what it was: clear failure. The result in 1932 made the breakthrough in 1930 seem petty. The House became Democratic, 310 to 117; and the Senate, 60 to 35.

For generations to come, American historians will doubtless be comparing the period 1930–36 to 2006–12 as years of crisis for capitalism.

Nevertheless, these numbers did not mean what they seemed—a landslide victory that ushered in the New Deal that followed. Herbert Hoover was out and Franklin Roosevelt was in, yet what "followed" for three more years was neither Social Security nor the Wagner Act but rather intense struggles at workplaces across the country. Striking for union recognition, workers mounted almost 4,000 job actions in 1933 and '34, most visibly a failed general strike of 200,000 that spread through Southern textile country and a second, more successful general strike on the San Francisco waterfront. Support for collective bargaining was strong in both Houses of Congress, but FDR, focused as he was on agriculture, blocked it. Finally, in the summer of 1935, after one of the anchors of New Deal legislation, the National Industrial Recovery Act, was declared unconstitutional, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the Wagner Act, 63 to 12. FDR finally got on board just before the bill soared through the House and became law—along with Social Security.

The GOP response to all this remained grounded in the belief that the New Deal was destructive and socialist. The party's most vivid voice was a redbaiting, occasionally anti-Semitic lobby calling itself the Liberty League. But in the same way that the evening news from Iraq mocks the rigidity of Bush talk today, such hysteria about socialism could not substitute for reality in 1933 and '34 any more than Hoover talk could in 1931 and '32. Never at any point in the 1930s did the GOP develop a rhetorical match for Roosevelt. His fireside chats on nationwide radio became the most dramatic and effective connection between the American people and their President ever forged, before or since. "Taxes shall be levied according to the ability to pay," he said. "That is the only American principle." He effectively ridiculed the Republican Party as the home to "economic royalists" who, despite having "two perfectly good legs…never learned to walk forward."

For generations still to come, American historians will doubtless be comparing the period 1930–36 to that of 2006–12 as years of high political-economic crisis for capitalism. One crisis stemmed from a worldwide depression, triggered by the American depression of 1929, the other by an ambitious scheme of globalization benefiting the financial sectors of every country in the world advanced enough to have a financial sector. It also severely harmed workers in all the advanced democracies, placing their labor movements under unbearable pressure—and none more so than in America. The most important achievement of the Democratic Party in the earlier period rested on the vital educational function it served on an absolutely essential subject: the role of demand in facilitating a healthy economy. Though later scholars would label the Wagner Act "labor's Magna Carta," it was, in fact, the nation's economy that was set temporarily on the path to liberation—even if it took another decade or so for some of the nation's classical economists to begin to consider that the long-term welfare of the economy and the growth of organized labor were essentially linked.

In the wake of the realignment of 1932, Congressional Democrats found themselves on this issue, the analysis of demand, hemmed in at square one—not only with journalists and other opinion-makers but with their own President. Both FDR and Congress could share in the achievement of Social Security. But the Wagner Act belonged to Congress alone—and to the American people who backed their representatives. Today, with the Wagner Act long since gutted, globalization is well along the path of rotting the fabric of the economy from below.

It will take a sensible and dedicated President and a sensible and strong Congress to set a more democratic course for the realigned politics that is coming. But the table has been set for both. Relentless Congressional inquiries have begun—and are unstoppable—because the initial target is a regime whose capacity for sustained deceit and wholesale incompetence has reached a broad plateau of ethical corruption that is without precedent in American history. Bush lied the country into a foreign quagmire that destroyed the goodwill toward the country of populations residing on every continent. He politicized and humiliated his own Justice Department, falsely accusing honorable men and women of incompetence. To protect his closest adviser, he betrayed lesser advisers, weakening the country's rule of law. In power-grabbing acts of centralization, through the grossly mistitled Patriot Act, he has repeatedly shown contempt for the Bill of Rights. Through acts that were legal but grotesquely undemocratic in philosophy, he destroyed the structure of the

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balanced budget he inherited, undermining long-term demand and hastening the economic downturn that has begun. He has proved his indifference to the fate of one of America's great cities because of his indifference to most of the people who lived in it. He has degraded the nation. Though our plate of dismay and despair is full, we have more to learn, and Congress, with Karl Rove's blood everywhere, will see that we learn it.

The citizenry as a whole has been pushed far back by the authoritarianism of the Bush/Cheney team and the greed it has inspired, particularly in finance and corporate medicine. The country, including the media at large, has a distance to travel to get up to speed for the revelations to come.

Finally, though American life in 2007 does not resemble the numbing degradation of the Depression years, something else is eating its way through the fabric of the commonwealth—a reality we don't yet possess the political language to describe with poise. Woven deeply into the shared experience of Americans is a sense of people actually "getting somewhere," of being able through hard work to "move up in the world" and, when disaster occurs, to get a second job to hold family catastrophe at bay. Over time, generations of parents have passed on a belief in the nation's democratic experiment, a concept at once American and biblical—originally set down with romantic seventeenth-century flair as "a city upon a hill." It accounts for the peculiarly American sense of the possibility of dignity for everyone. It is this very sense of what we should be as a people that stokes modern anxiety, activated as it now is by downsizings across the country. Initially surfacing privately, inside families, it is now a part of life, a social blemish that has turned into a hardened scar as highly skilled mechanics in dozens of occupations become unemployed and women have no option but to become family breadwinners. These anomalies are driven by the very industrial facts people once believed they had under control. At a time when the value of the minimum wage has sunk by 20 percent in a single decade, the enormous leap in wealth by the top 1 percent fails to console the rest of us. We all have proof there is (currently) no promise of a city on a hill. In 2007, the quality most visible at the top of the hill is greed.

This sober reality explains why Americans are giving themselves permission, once again, to think broadly about democratic possibility. Though most people work for businesses, they have learned to be skeptical when the boss tells them what is good for the nation. The suffocating consistency of the Bush Administration's lies has expanded this skepticism exponentially. But in a corporate culture where conservative arrogance has been rubbed in people's faces at work and in politics, it takes a while for citizens to allow themselves to stand up.

To assist them, a measure of Democratic Party clarity would be very helpful. Since GOP incumbents cannot campaign effectively in 2008 by dealing seriously with issues that now bear down on the American people, much of Republican electioneering will consist of TV attacks on the character of their opponents. Democratic defenses will depend on the power of the agenda they have advanced. In 2004 the many-sided John Kerry was Swift-Boated into history's dustbin, while two years later in Tennessee, there appeared a Democratic candidate who managed to take the lead in a tight Senate race. He was a nice

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fellow, though prone to straddling issues of substance. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the bigger the issue, the wider his straddle. Detecting opportunity, GOP consultants served up a casually dressed Caucasian lass who, in a racist TV ad, coyly used the Democratic candidate's first name—as if to court him and degrade him all at once. The GOP aspirant, a man of modest talent, managed to pull out a narrow win in a Democratic year. When Democrats learn how to be clear on central issues, this kind of ignoble foolishness will no longer succeed. Party realignment will then happen and the country can start to work on its very real problems.

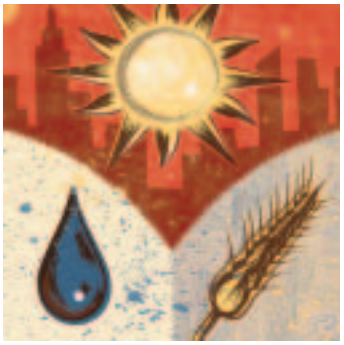
And not until then. ■

A BIG HIT WITH CONSERVATIVES, THE PAPER HAS LOST MONEY FOR FIVE YEARS.

Sun-rise in New York

SCOTT SHERMAN

One of the more damaging articles concerning the United Nations Oil for Food scandal appeared in a New York newspaper on November 26, 2004, under the byline of Claudia Rosett. In that article Rosett revealed that Kojo Annan, the son of the UN Secretary General, had remained on the payroll of the Swiss firm Cotecna, which had a UN contract in Iraq, for years after he had supposedly ended his relationship with the company. The piece had an instant ripple effect: Three days later William Safire devoted his *New York Times* column to Rosett's revelations and demanded that Kofi Annan resign from his post. Senator Norm Coleman, whose subcommittee was then investigating the Oil for Food program, joined the chorus two days later in the *Wall Street Journal* with a piece titled "Kofi Annan Must Go," a piece that also cited Rosett's reporting.



TIM ROBINSON

Rosett's article did not appear in the *New York Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Daily News*—all of which are routinely scathing about the UN—but in the *New York Sun*, a pugnacious conservative daily that sprang up in lower Manhattan a few months after the attacks of September 11.

When the *Sun* was born in 2002, media soothsayers predicted that it would never find a permanent place in New York's brutally competitive newspaper market and that the hearse would arrive within two years. But the *Sun* is still here, and on April 16 it will mark its fifth anniversary. Although it is funded by a coterie of wealthy individuals, published on a shoestring and edited by a tenacious journalist, Seth Lipsky, the paper is not a financial success: Last year Lipsky told journalism students at Columbia that the *Sun* lost $1 million a month. But those losses amount to pocket change for the proprietors, whose investment and ongoing commitment have yielded something else: a broadsheet that injects conservative ideology into the country's most influential philanthropic, intellectual and media hub; a paper whose day-to-day coverage of New York City emphasizes lower taxes, school vouchers and free-market solutions to urban problems; a paper whose elegant culture pages hold their own against the *Times* in quality and sophistication; a paper that breaks news and crusades on a single issue; a paper that functions as a journalistic SWAT team against individuals and institutions seen as hostile to Israel and Jews; and a paper that unapologetically displays the scalps of its victims.

Ten years ago I published a *Nation* cover story titled "Why America Needs a Labor Daily," in which I attempted to revive an idea that A.J. Liebling had floated in the late 1940s: that the American labor movement should create a daily newspaper to counteract the probusiness—and antiunion—bias of the mainstream press. A month later, Seth Lipsky, whom I had never met, invited me to his office at the *Forward* newspaper, situated in the Workmen's Circle Building on East 33rd Street in Manhattan. I found myself gazing at a bald, diminutive man who looked as though he had just stepped out of a Charles Dickens novel, a man whom Hendrik Hertzberg of *The New Yorker* has described as "Pickwickian."

Lipsky is an intriguing figure in New York journalism. As a high school student he kept the masthead of the *New York Times* tucked away in his wallet. After graduating from Harvard he went to Vietnam as a combat reporter. In 1971 he launched a nineteen-year career at the W*all Street Journal*, during which time he served on the editorial page under the late Robert Bartley and assimilated much of Bartley's ferocious intellectual and rhetorical manner. In 1990 Lipsky was hired by the *Forward*, once the bible for the Yiddish-speaking masses of Manhattan's Lower East Side, to produce a weekly edition of the paper in English. A neoconservative admirer of Ronald Reagan, Lipsky immediately ran into political difficulties: Early on he received a letter from the late Arthur Hertzberg, who declared that the editors of the old Yiddish *Forward* "did not create and maintain a newspaper of socialists and social democrats for their inheritance to become now, in English, an echo of the *Wall Street Journal*." Lipsky, whose heroes include Ze'ev Jabotinsky (the militant Zionist who admired Mussolini), Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon, certainly did push the *Forward* rightward—a 1994 editorial called for the bombing of North Korea's nuclear facilities—but he also won praise for his editorial finesse. "No matter how conservative Lipsky may be on certain subjects, especially foreign affairs," David Remnick wrote thirteen years ago in *The New Yorker*, "his stewardship

Scott Sherman is a contributing writer to The Nation.

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of the paper has been open and daring."

But Lipsky had higher ambitions than to publish a weekly edition of the *Forward*. He summoned me to his office a decade ago to encourage me to start a labor daily but also to boast of his own grand plan: to transform the *Forward* into a daily, one with a pro-union orientation in line with both the *Forward*'s history and my blueprint in *The Nation*. His scheme seemed grandiose: A top newspaper analyst, John Morton, had told me that a new daily would cost $300 million, and I doubted that Lipsky, sitting in his modest office in the Workmen's Circle Building, could raise even a fraction of that sum.

I underestimated Lipsky. Three years later he left the *Forward*, and in 2002 he delivered on his promise to create a new daily (though not, alas, one that stands with organized labor). Today the *Sun* has four principal investors—men who, Lipsky notes, "are among the most successful financial investors in history." It's a group that includes Michael Steinhardt, Lipsky's former partner at the *Forward*; Thomas Tisch, a board member of the Manhattan Institute; Bruce Kovner, chair of the American Enterprise Institute and a man ranked by *Forbes* as the eighty-fifth richest American; and Roger Hertog, chairman emeritus of the Manhattan Institute. In an interview Hertog half-seriously quipped that, owing to the *Sun*'s steady financial losses, his involvement in the paper is an example of "delusional behavior." But he proudly views the *Sun* as an idea factory for the elite and says he'll continue to support it into the foreseeable future. (Steinhardt made the same vow, saying, "It's money well spent.") "If you just did a random survey of opinion leaders in New York, whether they be cultural or political or business types," Hertog says, "I think you would find that a very large number read the paper." *Sun* watchers concur that Lipsky has captured a limited but influential audience. Says Fred Siegel of Cooper Union, "In New York and Washington it gets read by politicians and intellectuals, and by people in the think-tank world."

A few weeks ago I asked Lipsky why he launched a conservative daily in 2002, when New York already had two of them—the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Post*. "If one drew a quadrant of New York newspapers," he replied, "there was a center-left broadsheet, the *Times*. There was a center-left tabloid, the *News*, and a center-right tabloid, the *Post*. But there was not, until the *Sun*, a center-right broadsheet." (He views the *Journal* as a national paper with a limited interest in New York City. But it's hard to agree with his assessment that Mortimer Zuckerman's *Daily News*, which has fervently supported the Iraq War, is a center-left publication.) Before Lipsky could launch his center-right broadsheet he needed someone to manage the newsroom, so he brought with him from the *Forward* a fiery young protégé, Ira Stoll, a Harvard *Crimson* veteran best known for his website devoted to the daily excoriation of the *Times*, smartertimes.com. Today Stoll is a busy man: When he is not supervising his fifteen full-time reporters or collaborating with Lipsky on the unsigned editorials (one of which recently urged Dick Cheney to run for President), he is endeavoring to complete a biography of Samuel Adams for the Free Press.

The editorial formula fashioned by Lipsky and Stoll is a

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peculiar mix of canned political ideology and spry reportage and criticism. Consider a recent issue, March 20, beginning with the front page. The main story concerns the latest developments in a major police shooting in New York, followed by a piece about New York City's public schools ("Schools Seeing Fast Rise in Bureaucrats"), a dispatch from the state capital ("Spitzer Nears Hospital Deal That Could Isolate Union"), an overview of the rift at the NAACP and a feature about a businessman's obsession with a 1906 Danish painting. The opinion pages, which usually feature William F. Buckley Jr., Cal Thomas and the scabrous Mark Steyn, contain two unsigned editorials—one calling for school vouchers, the other demanding an end to rent stabilization and rent control—alongside op-ed pieces lashing Human Rights Watch and French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin ("Oh So Civilized, Monsieur"). In the culture section readers are treated to an assessment of Ira Glass's Showtime debut of *This American Life*, a review of a concert at Carnegie Hall by the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, a survey of dance photography, an essay about Hesiod and a review by renowned critic Gary Giddins of the DVD release of the film *Muriel*. All in all, a fabulous read for culture and a tendentious (though not uninteresting) one for politics.

'In New York and Washington it gets read by politicians and intellectuals, and by people in the think-tank world.' —Fred Siegel

It's only a slight stretch to say that Israel is to the *Sun* what gossip is to the *New York Post* or jockdom is to *Sports Illustrated*. A portrait of the historian Lucy Dawidowicz once hung in the Chambers Street office of the *Sun*, and her best-known book provided the *Sun* with the theme of its first editorial in 2002: "The War Against the Jews." For Lipsky and Stoll, it's a war that exists in perpetuity, and some of the *Sun*'s most relentless crusading has been undertaken against New York institutions the editors view as hostile to Israel, Zionism and Jews. In late 2003 the *Sun* published a series of articles and editorials about the Ford Foundation, assailing it for funding Palestinian NGOs accused of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic behavior at the UN World Conference Against Racism, in Durban in 2001. The articles, which strongly implied that the foundation's top executives were anti-Semitic, jolted members of Congress into action, and Ford was eventually forced to alter its grant-making procedures in a way that disillusioned many of its admirers [see Sherman, "Target Ford," June 6, 2006].

In October 2004 the *Sun* published the first of twenty articles and editorials alleging that Jewish students at Columbia University were experiencing systematic harassment by anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic professors. Some of the stories ran under the tag line "Crisis at Columbia," and a typical headline declared, "Anti-Defamation League Director: University Fails to Protect Jewish Students." A number of Columbia's most distinguished (and longest-serving) Jewish faculty members dismissed the *Sun*'s allegations as preposterous, but the *Sun*'s drumbeat soon attracted the attention of the *Daily News*, *New York* magazine and the *Times* [see Sherman, "The Mideast Comes to Columbia," April 4, 2005]. What Lipsky calls "an enormous story" was born, and he is unapologetic about his paper's unrelenting coverage of Columbia: "Bob Bartley used to say it takes seventy-five editorials to get a law passed."

Occasionally the *Sun* uses tactics that would please the ghost of Walter Winchell. In March 2006 Lipsky walked by Ira Stoll's desk and heard him laughing. And with that laugh a *Sun* crusade was born. Stoll had been reading a Harvard University working paper by professors Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, of Harvard and the University of Chicago, respectively, titled "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy." The barrage began with a piece by reporter Eli Lake, who contacted David Duke and then produced a page-one story announcing that the Walt-Mearsheimer paper was "winning praise from white supremacist David Duke." (That story was headlined "David Duke Claims to be Vindicated by a Harvard Dean.") A few days later another *Sun* story insisted, with no evidence, that the two professors had "culled sections of the paper from neo-Nazi and other anti-Israel hate Web sites." (Walt and Mearsheimer dismissed the accusation as "absurd"; the link with David Duke, they said, is "guilt by association.")

In its zeal to demolish Walt and Mearsheimer the *Sun* also chased their colleagues—including Marvin Kalb, who, like Walt, holds a post at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. A *Sun* editorial noted that Kalb had recently petitioned the Newspaper Association of America on a historical matter pertaining to Jewish journalists trapped in Hitler's Germany, and went on, "Now—at a moment when Israelis and Jews everywhere are under attack in a global war against America and Israel launched by Islamofascists—the cat has got his tongue." The next day the *Sun* printed a front-page story, "Kalb Upbraids Harvard Dean Over Israel," in which Kalb proclaimed that the Walt-Mearsheimer paper "clearly does not meet the academic standards of a Kennedy School research paper." Kalb declined to be interviewed by *The Nation*. (The same editorial warned Harvard to get its house in order and added, "The Ford Foundation recently had its own learning experience.")

When I asked Lipsky to delineate the *Sun*'s editorial priorities, he included in his list "the United Nations—its scandals, the anti-Israel maneuvering." The UN is indeed one of the *Sun*'s most passionate and enduring obsessions. Lipsky employs a full-time UN correspondent, Benny Avni, who is a sharp thorn in the side of the UN hierarchy and who produced no fewer than 237 pieces in 2006. Edward Mortimer, director of communications under Kofi Annan, was continually exasperated by Avni's reporting: "I felt that he was systematically putting the most negative, conspiratorial interpretation on practically everything that happened at the UN." Few topics at the UN are off limits to Avni: In 2005 he somewhat gleefully reported that Mark Malloch Brown, then Annan's chief of staff, was renting a house from George Soros in Westchester. It was a purely commercial transaction, and Avni alleged no wrongdoing. But the *Sun* was keen to link Malloch Brown to Soros, who has a prominent place in the *Sun*'s pantheon of villains.

Today Malloch Brown, who has left the UN, considers the story to be "*totally* unfair. It just fell way below minimum journalistic standards of research or ethics." In his estimation, the *Sun* is "a pimple on the backside of American journalism." But

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Sunday:
Dinner with Richard Dreyfuss

Monday:
Q and A with Ralph Nader and Liza Featherstone

Tuesday:
Ogling the Hubbard Glacier next to Mark Hertsgaard

Wednesday Night:
At the blackjack table with Victor Navasky

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Patricia Williams
Nation "Diary of a Mad Law Professor" columnist

Liza Featherstone
Nation contributing editor and author of *Selling Women Short*

Doug Henwood
Editor of *Left Business Observer* and author of *After the New Economy*

Mark Hertsgaard
Nation environment correspondent and author of *Earth Odyssey*

Richard Dreyfuss
Academy Award winning actor and education activist

Robert Scheer
Nation contributing editor and editor of Truthdig.com

Mary Mapes
Peabody Award-winning CBS News producer and author of *Truth and Duty*

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he accepts that the paper's obsession with the UN translates into influence. Regarding Rosett's reporting on Kojo Annan, he admits the *Sun* "does punch way above its circulation number, on occasion." He goes on to say, "Clearly amongst its minuscule circulation were a significant number of diplomats. And so it did at times act as some kind of rebel house paper inside the UN. It fed the gossip mills and what was said in the cafeterias."

As a business venture the *Sun* is not exactly flourishing. On its front page the paper proclaims: "150,000 of New York City's Most Influential Readers Every Day." But according to its latest audit, the *Sun* is selling 13,211 hard copies a day and giving away more than 85,000. (By contrast, the *Daily News* sells about 700,000 copies a day.) In an attempt to lasso subscribers in certain New York ZIP codes, the *Sun* recently offered free subscriptions for a full year, an unusual way for a newspaper to build circulation.

People who know Lipsky say that in 2006 he was very anxious about the *Sun*'s future. Today that anxiety appears to have dissipated: He is enthusiastic about his paper's website and insists that "the print edition of the *Sun* is growing sharply, albeit from a small base. I'm highly optimistic." He likes to recite a famous saying from poker: "lose early, win late." The paper's survival depends almost entirely on Lipsky's ability to manage his wealthy investors, a task in which this journalist-entrepreneur has excelled and for which he is well suited. "The *Sun* could continue as long as Lipsky's investors are interested in continuing it," says Hendrik Hertzberg of *The New Yorker*. "I'd expect to see it survive for several more years. And they'll get a boost if the Democrats win the next presidential election." ■

LETTERS

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

prove more effective as a tool for the PR-savvy mercenary industry than as a mechanism for enforcing laws and insuring accountability.

Representative Dennis Kucinich has called for a withdrawal of all US contractors from Iraq, saying they have become an "arm of the Administration and its policies." That may be the only effective action that could be taken. Unfortunately, Democrats seem to be ignoring contractors in their "withdrawal" plan. It may well be that there is no system that could oversee such a massive private army in a war zone like Iraq; that the use of such forces undermines US democracy and the sovereignty of other nations; that Congress will have to face the consequences of such radical privatization of the US war machine. It is time Congress focused on stopping the use of these forces by passing effective anti-mercenary legislation that will end the system that makes war profitable.

As for Capt. Richard Daniel, who worked for Blackwater in a "paramilitary close-knit group," I would simply let his words speak for themselves and refer readers to the US Constitution for further insight. JEREMY SCAHILL

WOMEN FEEL THE CARE CRISIS

Women from Portland, Oregon, to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, wrote in to bear witness to Ruth Rosen's March 12 "The Care Crisis." Single, married, daughters, mothers, grandmothers testified to the daily stress of trying to earn a living while caring for others.

Elizabethtown, Pa.

■ I read "The Care Crisis" in vain for any mention of the role that men should play in the childcare and eldercare needs of our society. In this lengthy piece about what government and corporations should do, the sons and fathers are exempted from responsibility. Why is it a women's issue to begin with? Why do we automatically expect daughters to provide for ailing relatives and let sons off scot-free? Rather than blaming feminism and postfeminism for women's "time bind," why don't we demand that men do their fair share of family care? Until the notion that the care of children and the elderly is a women's issue is changed, there will be no solution to this crisis. AMY RAFFENSPERGER

Brooklyn, NY

■ I was disappointed to be quoted only as a "young feminist" by Ruth Rosen, as I work with an organization, Redstockings Allies and Veterans, fighting for universal childcare, healthcare and paid parental leave. Redstockings is the women's liberation group of the 1960s that brought us the first abortion speak-out and the slogan Sisterhood Is Powerful. On March 8 they held a speak-out at the United Nations to expose and protest the myth that US women are the most liberated in the world, and to demand "social wage" programs for a more fair and democratic means of raising the next generation. Women can join us, and we can win this (www.womensliberation.org). ANNIE TUMMINO

Glen Ridge, NJ

■ Ruth Rosen gets it right: Feminists in the 1960s and '70s knew we couldn't do it alone. As she describes the vision, men and women would share in raising children and in housework. And the government and business would support childcare. Many of us also envisioned a shorter workweek: not just flexible time but fewer hours on the job for everybody, enabling couples to raise kids themselves instead of having to delegate the job to childcare facilities.

It seemed a reasonable hope in 1970. For about a century and a half, the workweek had been getting shorter. My wife and I, both teachers, were able to be with our children a lot. We thought that in the future, most working people would have that opportunity. It hasn't worked out that way. The workweek has been getting longer and longer. Now even the hope that parents could raise their young children has been lost, and Rosen calls only for better childcare for overworked parents, not for less work and more chance to parent. STEVE GOLIN

St. Cloud, Minn.

■ Wonderful article! But I wished it had talked more about the major reason Europe has good work-life policies and we don't: Europe bargains its work arrangements collectively, while here we all compete as individuals against each other trying to show we're the "ideal worker." Our long-hours culture is an environmental issue, a social justice issue, an issue that affects so many other progressive issues.

I've talked at length in a workshop I give about how collective action in Europe has brought Europeans shorter workweeks, longer vacations and better family leave. At the end of last year's workshop, a young woman asked, "What can I as an individual do about this?" As an individual. *Sigh.* I felt like beating my head against the nearest pillar. But I replied that she has lots of company in her generation and that if all of us acted together, we could change things.

Robert Putnam writes in *Bowling Alone* that when it comes to joining a union, young people may not so much resist the idea of "unions" as the idea of "joining." Please, if you are a young person who identifies with this article, join something! Find a candidate you can volunteer for or donate to who works on these issues. (They're out there, and they need your support.) Or join Moms Rising (momsrising.org). Read Ann Crittenden, Arlie Hochschild and Joan Williams. Read Ellen Galinsky, Jody Heymann and Jodie Levin-Epstein. Get informed, get active and get connected.

The idea that our only avenue for action is as individual consumers is propaganda we've been fed by the right wing since the Reagan years. We can do together what we can't do alone. Indeed, that's the only way we're going to get it done. Treating this as an individual's issue, or an individual family's issue, leads us nowhere. ANNE NOLAN

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Inevitable Revolutions

GYAN PRAKASH

THE LAST MUGHAL: The Fall of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857.
By William Dalrymple.
Knopf. 534 pp. $30.

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* ends with a poignant exchange between Aziz, a young Muslim doctor, and Fielding, a Briton sympathetic to Indians. Though Aziz is acquitted of the false charge of molesting a British woman, he is deeply wounded by the experience and wants nothing to do with the colonial race. Fielding, an old friend, seeks him out and asks why they cannot be friends again.

> But the horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices. "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there."

This is how the novel ended, written in 1924 against the backdrop of the first mass nationalist upsurge against British rule. Gandhi, who led the movement, was a product of the Indian encounter with Western culture. He trained as a barrister in London and spent more than two decades in South Africa, developing his doctrine of nonviolent struggle in campaigning for Indian rights. Western ideas deeply influenced his political philosophy, and he maintained lifelong friendships with a number of Europeans. But anticolonialism formed the bedrock of his relationship with the West. Despite good intentions, there could be no friendship in the abstract. You could not simply wish away empire when it formed the setting in which the members of colonizing and colonized cultures met.

Historians of empire have always understood this chasm in human relationships created by the fact of one culture ruling over another. But a reappraisal of this truth has been under way for some time now at the hands of revisionist historians of the British Empire. These historians dislike Edward Said and the postcolonial critics who cite French theory and argue that the British Empire established lasting Orient/Occident and East/West oppositions in politics and knowledge. Uncomfortable with the political passion and theoretical language of these critics, the revisionists counsel us (in mainly British accents, with some American intonations) to lower the anti-imperial temperature and write old-fashioned narrative history. They contend that empire is the oldest and one of the most widely practiced forms of governance.

In the revisionist account, the British in India are seen not as agents of colonial exploitation but as hapless, well-meaning imperialists.

The Romans did it, the Spaniards did it, the Russians did it, the Chinese did it, even the newly independent nations have done it. Everybody oppressed everyone else. Pax Britannica may have ruled over one-fifth of humanity, but the conquerors, soldiers, administrators and scholars were also human. Why bring in such abstractions as Orientalism and colonialism? Underneath it all, the story of the British Empire is a narrative of individuals caught up in human encounters between cultures.

True, the revisionist argument continues, Britons went to distant lands to profit and conquer. But vastly outnumbered by the local population and pitted against powerful adversaries, they were deeply conscious of their vulnerability. This was particularly true in the eighteenth century, when the British were all too aware of the power and grandeur of the Ottomans and the Mughals. The Barbary corsairs and Algerian slave owners harassed them in the Mediter-

Gyan Prakash, a professor of history at Princeton University, is the author, among other books, of Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India.

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ranean, the Indian tribes challenged them in North America and the French engaged them in imperial wars. Then, their American territories fell. On the Indian subcontinent, the Mughal Empire was reduced to a shell, but successor states posed a serious challenge to the East India Company's military position. Embattled, the British were forced to depend on indigenous allies and could not afford to treat native populations and cultures as inferior. Forcibly or willingly, many crossed cultural borders. They shed European trousers for native pajamas, grew Hindu mustaches and Muslim beards, married local women and kept concubines, and collected indigenous texts and artifacts. A human story of interest and immersion in other cultures, languages and artifacts—not mastery—underpinned British imperial expansion.

Stroke by stroke, this revisionist historiography seeks to redraw the portrait of the British Empire. This picture has received prominent attention in British publications, including leftist ones, eager to mark distance from their imperial past while trying to rescue some cultural value from it for the present. In this version of the story, set against the current spectacle of an arrogant and dangerous American imperialism, we are told the British Empire developed willy-nilly as a collection of territories and cultures; it was never the project that nineteenth-century imperialists claimed and that present-day postcolonial critics allege. The conquerors, particularly in the eighteenth century, are seen not as agents of colonial oppression and exploitation but as hapless imperialists caught in a hostile environment; weak and embattled, they eagerly embraced indigenous allies and cultures.

This revisionist view of the British Empire underpins William Dalrymple's deeply researched and beautifully written *The Last Mughal*. The subject of his study is the 1857 Uprising against British rule in India. It was an event that, according to Dalrymple, marked the end of the eighteenth century's "relatively easy relationship of Indian and Briton" and the onset of "hatreds and racism" that became so characteristic of the nineteenth-century Raj. "The Uprising, it is clear, was the result of that change, not its cause."

When the Uprising broke out, Company rule in India was already a century old. During this time, the Company had acquired effective military and political control over nearly the entire subcontinent. The imperial Mughals, a dynasty that traced its lineage back to Timur (Tamerlane) and had ruled India since 1526, still enjoyed nominal authority. The aging Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, lived in Delhi. Clutching hollow emblems of authority, Zafar presided over the royal household and harem. Real power lay with the Company, which used it to build a modern empire. The Company annexed territories, established courts, laid telegraph and railway lines, collected taxes and instituted land settlements that caused widespread discontent. The developing ideology of liberal imperialism, buttressed by evangelical Christianity, left little room for existing cultures and traditions. The old nobility and landholders were summarily cast aside, and Thomas Macaulay declared that all the accumulated products of Oriental knowledge were worth a single shelf of a Western library.

COURTESY KNOPF, FROM THE COLLECTION OF STUART CARY WELCH

The coronation portrait of Bahadur Shah Zafar II, by Ghulam Ali Khan (circa 1837)

The simmering discontent against British rule boiled over with the "greased cartridge" controversy. At the end of 1856, the Company army, which consisted of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys (recruits) commanded by British officers, introduced the new Enfield rifle. Loading the rifle required biting open the cartridge, which was greased to ease pushing the ball down the barrel. Initially, the grease was made of cow and pig fat, defiling to both Hindus and Muslims. This was quickly changed to beeswax and linseed oil, but the damage was done. A rumor spread that the British were deliberately using pig and cow fat to violate the sepoys' religions.

The Uprising began on May 10, 1857, with a mutiny of Indian soldiers in the military barracks of Meerut. The mutineers killed their British officers and marched thirty miles south to Delhi, where they were joined by the sepoys in the regiments stationed in the city. Together, they "restored" Zafar as their emperor. The spirit of rebellion spread to other garrisons in North India and turned from a limited mutiny into a widespread revolt of peasants, artisans, laborers, religious leaders and the old gentry. For more than a year, the fire of the Uprising raged. European officers, women and children were massacred. British authority crumbled in large parts of North India until it was restored with brute force in the summer of 1858. Zafar's glory ended even earlier. Within a few months, the rebel position in Delhi fell. The emperor was tried and convicted for hatching an international Muslim conspiracy against his English benefactors, and exiled to Burma. The charge was legally and factually absurd. Since Zafar had never renounced sovereignty over the Company, he could not possibly be guilty of treason. In fact, Dalrymple explains, "from a legal point of view, a good case could be made that it was the East India Company which was the real rebel, guilty of revolt against a feudal superior to whom it had sworn allegiance for nearly a century." Equally groundless was the allegation that Zafar was behind an international Muslim conspiracy stretching from Constantinople to Delhi. "The Uprising in fact showed every sign of being initiated by upper-caste Hindu sepoys reacting against specifically military grievances perceived as a threat to their faith and dharma; it then spread rapidly through the country, attracting a fractured and diffuse collection of other groups alienated by aggressively insensitive and brutal British policies." The British "bigoted and Islamophobic argument" reduced the complexity of the rebellion to an oversimplified and fictional picture of a "global Muslim conspiracy with an appealingly visible and captive hate figure at its centre." Back in England, the Uprising and the aftermath of British bloodlust shocked the Parliament into assuming direct rule over India. Company rule was abolished, and Queen Victoria became the Empress of India.

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- **Chris Hedges: Religion: The Politics of Faith** at 11:00 AM in Haines 39
- **Rebecca Solnit: The Global Village** at 12:00 PM in Fowler Museum Lenart Auditorium
- **Joe Conason: The Age of Spin: Controlling the Message** at 12:00 PM in Ackerman Grand Ballroom
- **Eyal Press: Divided We Stand: Facing Tough Issues** at 12:30 PM in Haines 39
- **Gore Vidal in Conversation with Jon Wiener** at 1:00 PM in Royce Hall
- **Marc Cooper: Scripted Spaces: What is the West?** at 2:30 PM in Moore 100

SIGNINGS AT NATION BOOKS BOOTH 360 (OPPOSITE ROYCE HALL)

11:30 AM - GORE VIDAL, author of *Imperial America*
2:00 PM - NICK SCHOU, author of *Kill the Messenger*
3:00 PM - GABRIEL THOMPSON, author of *There's No José Here*

SUNDAY, APRIL 29TH

FESTIVAL PANELS AT THE UCLA CAMPUS

- **Walter Mosley in Conversation with Karen Grigsby Bates** at 10:30 AM in Royce Hall
- **Rebecca Solnit: Land & Sea: The Health of the Planet** at 12:00 PM in Haines 39
- **Ralph Nader in Conversation with Marc Cooper** at 12:30 PM in Royce Hall
- **Nick Schou: Journalism: Getting the Story** at 1:00 PM in Moore 100
- **Ann Louise Bardach: Biography: Patriotism & Dissent** at 1:30 PM in Haines 39
- **Gabriel Thompson: Crossing the Border: Immigrant Lives** 2:30 PM in Schoenberg Hall
- **Chris Hedges: Iraq: What's Next?** at 2:30 PM in Ackerman Grand Ballroom

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1:00 PM - WALTER MOSLEY, author of *Life Out of Context*
2:00 PM - JEREMY SCAHILL, author of *Blackwater*
3:00 PM - KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL, author of *Dictionary of Republicanisms*

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Understandably, the Uprising aroused heated emotions. The British officials and civilians caught up in it captured the experience in their writings. Several fictional and historical accounts were published, including Flora Annie Steel's novel *On the Face of Waters* (1896) and John Kaye's three-volume *History of the Sepoy War in India* (1877). In the British imperial imagination the Mutiny was remembered as the moment when Indians bared their barbarian souls. In Indian nationalist mythology, it was the first war of independence. Outside these stock images and myths, there exists a substantial body of sophisticated and complex historical work on the Uprising, notably the writings of Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Gautam Bhadra and Eric Stokes. But historians have largely ignored Delhi's experience of the cataclysm, preferring to focus on areas where the revolt was more protracted.

Dalrymple, a British travel writer and historian who divides his time between London and Delhi, sets out to correct this neglect. Writing with obvious affection for Delhi and appreciation for Mughal culture, he shows that the experience of the rebellion in the city was quite distinct. It was the seat of the imperial Mughals and the center of high Indo-Muslim culture. Even if Zafar no longer exercised real power, the emperor, as the rebel proclamation demonstrated, still exercised tremendous symbolic significance. From his palace in Delhi's Red Fort, Zafar wrote accomplished poetry and presided over a refined court milieu. Living under his patronage was Ghalib, possibly the greatest poet ever in the Urdu language, and one who went on to record his experiences of the Uprising. Using sources in Persian and Urdu along with voluminous British papers, Dalrymple has written a riveting and poignant account of the events of 1857 in Delhi.

When the mutineers descended on Delhi, the city initially welcomed them. Dalrymple shows that Zafar was gratified by the "restoration" of his imperial sovereignty but chafed at the lack of proper deference the rebels showed. He complained bitterly about the violation of imperial protocols and the country manners of the largely Hindu sepoys and was alarmed by the jihadi rebels who arrived from the North Indian town of Bareilly to add religious zeal to the Uprising. Trapped between the imperious British and the rude sepoys and zealous jihadis, Zafar reluctantly assumed the mantle of rebellion. However, he was too weak, too indecisive and utterly incapable of assuming the role assigned to him. The Uprising floundered and the elite opinion in the city turned against the violence and the unsophisticated culture of the lowly sepoys. Bandits and roving rebels ruled the roost on highways, making escape from the city hazardous.

Europeans found their houses ransacked, their property looted and their lives endangered. Upon victory, the British celebrated their triumph by letting loose a reign of terror on the fleeing insurgents and Delhi's inhabitants. The princes who had participated in the Uprising surrendered unconditionally to a British officer, William Hodson, with the hope that their lives would be spared. Hodson stripped them naked and shot them in cold blood. Then he promptly proceeded to strip the corpses of their rings and amulets, which he pocketed. Satisfied with the killing and the loot, Hodson wrote to his sister: "I am not cruel, but I must confess I did enjoy the opportunity of ridding the earth of these wretches." Edward Vibart, who participated in what he called the "murder" of defenseless civilians, wrote about the horror of hearing women scream after witnessing their husbands and sons being butchered. "Heaven knows I feel no pity—but when some old grey bearded man is brought and shot before your eyes—hard must be that man's heart I think who can look on with indifference," he wrote. But horror quickly shifted to bravado and justification: "And yet it must be so for these black wretches shall atone with their blood for our murdered countrymen—my own father and mother—sister and brother all cry aloud for vengeance, and their son will avenge them." Slaughter followed slaughter. In the Kucha Chelan neighborhood, Dalrymple writes, about 1,400 residents were cut down: "After the British and their allies had tired of bayoneting the inhabitants, they marched forty survivors out to the Yamuna, lined them up before the walls of the Fort, and shot them." Among them were some of the most distinguished poets and artists of Delhi.

'I am not cruel, but I must confess I did enjoy the opportunity of ridding the earth of these wretches,' wrote a British officer to his sister.

The victors made little distinction between insurgents and civilians. George Wagentrieber wrote with satisfaction in the *Delhi Gazette Extra*: "Hanging is, I am happy to say, the order of the day here." Believing that the rebels had sexually assaulted their women (a charge proved false by a subsequent inquiry commission), "the British officers did little to stop the raping of the women of Delhi." To escape the victors' wrath, most of Delhi's residents fled to the surrounding countryside, finding shelters in tombs and ruins and scavenging for food. Looters went house to house, seizing whatever they could. "To all of us [soldiers]," wrote one officer, "the loot of the city was to be a fitting recompense for the toils and privations we had undergone." Prize Agents stalked the city, confiscating native property and delivering it to Europeans. To punish the residents for having supported the Uprising, the British considered leveling the entire city. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed. "Even so, great swathes of the city—especially around the Red Fort—were still cleared away." Many fine mosques, Sufi shrines, palaces and the houses of notables were demolished. Ghalib grieved that, under wanton destruction, "the whole city has become a desert." Dalrymple relates this story in all its horror, quoting extensively from the melancholy descriptions written by Delhi's literary elite and from accounts by the victors, who gleefully recorded the terrible vengeance they wreaked on the vanquished in what became known as the City of the Dead.

Dalrymple mourns the passing of an age, the end of Delhi's urbane milieu in which the Europeans had taken a deep interest. Now that the "beating heart of Indo-Islamic civilization had been ripped out," the British-Indian racial divide ripped open the body politic. Contrary to received opinion, Dalrymple argues that the Uprising did not cause this divide; rather, the blame should be placed on "the Victorian Evangelicals whose insensitivity, arrogance and blindness did much to bring the Uprising of 1857 down upon both their own heads and those of the people and court of Delhi, engulfing all of northern India in a religious war of terrible violence." The rebel violence and the British retribution merely widened the gap between the rulers and the ruled that had already opened before 1857. He tells this story with an eye on the current phenomenon of an evangelically inspired American imperial power locked in battle with jihadi Islam. He sees ghosts of the past in the present good-versus-evil war: "Today, West and East again face each other uneasily across a divide that many see as religious war. Jihadis again fight what they regard as a defensive action against their Christian enemies, and again innocent women, children and civilians are slaughtered." The contemporary passion for absolutes, he argues, inflicts irreparable

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damage on ordinary interactions and exchanges between cultures and religions.

As critical as Dalrymple is of the current ideological war of opposites, he is equally impatient with Edward Said and postcolonial critics. Writing with the traditional British suspicion of theory, he sees them as purveying the abstract concepts of Orientalism and colonialism. These abstractions, according to him, do injustice to the human interactions across identities that were common in the eighteenth century. Before nineteenth-century racism and colonial arrogance took over, the British and Indians bridged the distance of language and religion.

Dalrymple is on familiar ground here. He has published two acclaimed books that celebrated Europeans who crossed racial and religious boundaries. In *City of Djinns*, a book about his year in Delhi, he uncovers the ghosts of the city's turbulent and varied past. Among them was William Fraser, a Scotsman sent by the Company to Delhi in 1805 to pacify the brigand-infested countryside around Delhi. Cut off from his compatriots, Fraser gathered a private force of Indians and set about his business. Always ready to abandon the routine of the office desk for the excitement of the battleground in the Company's wars, he surrounded himself with a community of Indian followers whom his contemporaries likened to Scottish Highlanders. He adopted native dress and customs, and he fathered "as many children as the King of Persia" from his harem of Indian wives. Dalrymple compares him to Mr. Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; like Kurtz, "he saw himself as a European potentate ruling in a pagan wilderness." The Company officialdom did not trust him, but Fraser was no power-hungry brute. He was a philosopher who took a deep interest in Sanskrit, composed Persian couplets and befriended the poet Ghalib. His younger brother found him unrecognizable; he had turned "half Hindoostanee." In a curious twist, Dalrymple's research uncovered that Fraser was a distant cousin of his wife.

This mixture of the personal and the intellectual also animates Dalrymple's *White Mughals*. While researching the book, he discovered that his great-great grandmother was born to a Hindu Bengali woman who had married a Frenchman. This discovery awakened his interest in the unwritten history of interracial unions under empire. In *White Mughals*, he tells the fascinating story of James Kirkpatrick, the British Resident in the court of Hyderabad between 1797 and 1805. Kirkpatrick fell in love with 14-year-old Khair, the grandniece of a powerful Muslim noble, and married her despite official disapproval. Khair bore him two children, who were promptly packed off to England. After Kirkpatrick died, she had an affair with his assistant, who eventually deserted her. Khair was exiled from Hyderabad, lost her house and money and never got to see her children again. In telling this story of love and betrayal, Dalrymple weaves in accounts of other "White Mughals," men like Sir David Ochterlony, the British Resident in Delhi, who lived the life of a Mughal nobleman. He dressed in Indian clothes, had a fondness for hookahs and dance girls and strolled Delhi every evening with his thirteen wives, each mounted on an elephant.

The Last Mughal returns to this territory of Frasers and Ochterlonys. Dalrymple writes that there were a number of landed families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who walked the fault lines between Islam and Christianity, the Mughals and the British. Several of these families descended from European mercenaries who had married into the Mughal elite and practiced a hybrid lifestyle. They were Christians but had adopted Mughal customs and manners. All this cultural borrowing came under increasing scrutiny and critique with the consolidation of Company power and the arrival of the evangelicals by the 1830s. An intolerant spirit was in the air. The winds of change were blowing on the Muslim side as well. Zafar himself was born of a Hindu mother, not untypical of the Mughals. He promoted a form of mystical Sufi Islam and was revered by many as a saint. Delhi's literary culture was also open and tolerant, suspicious of orthodox theologians. But the orthodox opinion began gaining strength, setting the stage for the clash of fundamentalisms.

This is a neat formulation, but it is also false. The clash of religious fundamentalisms did not cause the Uprising. A great majority of the sepoys who mutinied and assembled in Delhi to "restore" the Mughal emperor were Hindus. Despite the presence of jihadi rebels, the rebellion was a remarkable display of Hindu-Muslim unity in Delhi and elsewhere. If it was a religious war, it was one only insofar as the rebels opposed what they thought was the British plot to impose Christianity. The growing evangelical influence was a factor in fomenting this opposition, but the causes of the Uprising lay in colonialism itself. Coercion, conflict and violence were built into colonial rule, even when it was imposed with the help of indigenous allies

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and soldiers. As the Company government violently displaced existing structures of power and authority, it encountered endemic opposition. The 1857 Mutiny in the army over greased cartridges served only to unify and escalate specific grievances at different places and among different groups into a widespread violent opposition to the Company.

To argue, as Dalrymple does, that it was only imperial arrogance and evangelical influence that forced the rebels to engage in a life-or-death struggle is to underestimate the depth of their determination. Revolt and resistance against colonialism were inherent in alien rule. Since the beginning of the Company conquest in the mid-eighteenth century, rebellions were endemic; the Uprising was only the most widespread and fierce expression of the built-in conflict between the colonizers and the colonized. Dalrymple overlooks this history and assumes that but for the nineteenth-century imperial foolhardiness, the imagined eighteenth-century empire might have remained intact. This would be like supposing that prior to present wars of fundamentalisms, the West's history of domination over the rest of the world was free of sharp oppositions and discords. In drawing a parallel between 1857 and the current "clash of civilizations," Dalrymple makes precisely such a suspect assumption. Whatever the role of the "clash of civilizations" ideology in the current conflict, the opposition to Western domination did not begin with it, just as the insurgency against Company rule in India did not start with the arrival of Victorian evangelicalism but was endemic to British rule. Empire has always produced challenge and resistance. If Dalrymple and like-minded writers were not so dismissive of the "abstractions" of Edward Said and postcolonial critics, they would not need the reminder that colonialism was always a fundamentally violent system.

Joseph Conrad wrote that the conquest of earth was never a pretty thing if you looked into it too closely, for it meant taking lands away from people of a different color and appearance. Even if racial superiority and the "civilizing mission" were not marshaled to justify the eighteenth-century empire, this does not mean that it was a pretty thing. As Nicholas Dirks's superb recent book *The Scandal of Empire* shows, greed, duplicity, corruption, exploitation and violence were present at the birth of Company rule in India. With perceptive readings of the British record in eighteenth-century India, Dirks shows that the scandal of colonial violence and oppression was systemic, and not just the product of a few bloodthirsty and corrupt officials. Edmund Burke's eloquent rage against the Company's arbitrary power during Warren Hastings's impeachment trial, for example, was underpinned by his scorn for Indian customs and traditions. He expressed sympathy for the plight of native rulers deposed by Hastings, but what really troubled him about the Company's conduct was that it was being corrupted by India. One day, he feared, this corruption would spread to Britain. The scandal of Company rule had to be expunged so that the record of the British Empire would remain untarnished. Such an assertion on behalf of the empire and its legitimacy is unthinkable without a belief in Britain's right to conquer and rule and a complete disdain for Indians.

Consider the fabrication of European deaths in the Calcutta Fort in 1757 into the mythical "Black Hole" incident. Dirks points out that combat rather than imprisonment caused most of the deaths, and that there were far fewer fatalities than initially claimed. But Europeans were so quick to believe the lurid tale of Oriental barbarism that the Black Hole soon acquired a mythical status. When the Company carried out sustained wars against indigenous rulers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the desire to punish native perfidy encouraged the brutal campaigns.

As globalization compresses space and time, those privileged and educated enough to travel between cultures find themselves increasingly impatient with the legacies of imperial racism and nationalist myths. This is understandable. But to retail the eighteenth century as a time when Europeans and non-Europeans overcame racial and religious boundaries is to fly in the face of historical evidence. To see the crossing of imperial borders in the lives of "White Mughals" is to misrepresent both the nature of interracial liaisons and imperial conquest.

Empire made the Frasers and the Ochterlonys possible. It was because of empire, not despite it, that Europeans took an interest in non-European cultures. Colonial power enabled the Europeans to enter into interracial unions, keep concubines and father children, and learn native languages and customs. This was largely a one-way street on which mostly European men traveled to "collect" Indian women, territory, texts and artifacts. Astonishingly, Dalrymple fails to see the sense of imperial entitlement that permitted Company men to penetrate indigenous culture and become White Mughals. He identifies William Fraser with Kurtz but still insists that the eighteenth-century conquerors could act without a sense of racial privilege. This is to claim that empire can permit "easy relationships" between cultures, that human exchanges can occur outside history. Not now, not then. ■

Mission Impossible

MAYA JASANOFF

THREE EMPIRES ON THE NILE: The Victorian Jihad, 1869–1899. By Dominic Green. Free Press. 328 pp. $27.

Since ancient times, statues have served as barometers of power: They go up when the fortunes of a regime run high, and when empires tumble they too can fall. What do you do with a defunct icon? The Greeks and the Romans used to recarve images, turning one emperor into another, or change pedestal captions to suit new circumstances. French revolutionaries toppled a statue of Louis XV in today's Place de la Concorde, melted it down and replaced it with a guillotine. More recently, in Budapest, the bronze and stone corpses of the Communist regime were set up in a sculpture park just outside town, aestheticized and touristified. One wonders what happened to that statue of Saddam Hussein, pulled down with such symbolic pomp—and careful staging—in Baghdad's Firdaus Square in 2003.

The fall of the British Empire, which could once treat about a quarter of the world as its sculpture garden, has produced statue anxieties of its own, particularly in the imperial capital. Postcolonial migra-

Maya Jasanoff's Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850 *won the 2005 Duff Cooper Prize. She is currently a fellow at the New York Public Library's Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers.*

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tion has transformed London into one of the world's most diverse cities, yet images of the old empire's heroes still stand throughout the city center. At best, they are irrelevant. London Mayor Ken Livingstone has called for the Trafalgar Square images of Gen. Sir Charles Napier (conqueror of Sindh in 1843) and Gen. Sir Henry Havelock (who led the relief of Lucknow in the 1857 Indian Mutiny) to be replaced by figures "that ordinary Londoners would know." At worst, they are reminders of the black deeds of Britain's imperial past. Livingstone has unsuccessfully lobbied to position a bronze of Nelson Mandela in the square as a monument to the "peaceful transition" from British imperial dominance "to a multiracial and multicultural world."

If Napier and Havelock were shifted to the Thames Embankment, as Livingstone has suggested, they would find themselves reunited with another figure that once stood in Trafalgar Square. Gen. Charles George Gordon's statue was moved during World War II to make way for the exhibition of a Lancaster bomber. Had he remained, he might have attracted more controversy than his comrades; he would certainly be better known. One of the most dynamic if eccentric Victorian imperial heroes, Gordon achieved fame in China, fighting the Taiping rebels in the 1860s; but he entered posterity in Sudan, where he was killed in 1885 by the army of a charismatic rebel who had proclaimed himself the Mahdi, or Muslim messiah. (Some may recognize Gordon in the form of Charlton Heston, who played him in the 1966 movie *Khartoum*, opposite Laurence Olivier, in fierce brownface, as the Mahdi.)

Gordon's last adventure coupled imperial bluster with humanitarian lobbying, pitted British supporters of overseas intervention against advocates of withdrawal and set European power against Muslim revolutionaries. Sound familiar? Dominic Green would like you to think so. These exploits form a connecting thread through *Three Empires on the Nile*, Green's imaginative retelling of how Britain gained supremacy in Egypt and Sudan during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

His story begins with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Though the brainchild of a Frenchman, the canal proved vital to British interests by providing a rapid route to India, Britain's most valuable imperial possession. It had the added benefit of instantly increasing the strategic and commercial importance of Egypt in British eyes. But the tremendous costs of its construction plunged the ruler

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of Egypt, Khedive Ismail, into unrecoverable debt. In 1875 Ismail sold his controlling interest in the canal to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, giving Britain a substantial stake in Egypt's fortunes. The sale did not, however, stave off Ismail's bankruptcy or the establishment of a joint Anglo-French commission to supervise his finances and his government.

Most people do not welcome foreign intervention, and the Egyptians were no exception. Even Egypt's rulers could be perceived as outsiders by their subjects: They were subordinates of the Ottoman sultan; ethnically non-Arab; and increasingly Westernized, to the chagrin of the intelligentsia and dispossessed peasantry alike. Mounting popular discontent found a figurehead in the form of Col. Ahmed Urabi (or Arabi), a peasant by birth, who forced the khedive to accept a nationalist administration in 1881. Threatened by the Urabists—their rallying cry was "Egypt for the Egyptians"—Britain and France menaced Urabi's government in turn. British warships were sent to sit in the waters off Alexandria, and in July 1882, in the wake of an anti-European riot, they turned their guns on the city. A British invasion quickly followed, with blunt orders to "put down Arabi and establish Khedive's power." Before the year was out, Urabi had been defeated, tried and sent into exile in Ceylon. Britain now occupied Egypt—though only temporarily, the government said.

But to the south, more trouble stirred. Since the 1820s, Egypt had ruled Sudan and profited from East Africa's massive slave trade. Under mounting pressure from British abolitionists, Ismail hired agents—Charles Gordon premier among them—to combat the traders. Meanwhile, from an island in the White Nile, a visionary named Mohammed Ahmed began mounting his own resistance to the Egyptian regime. By the early 1880s, the Mahdi, as he now styled himself, had turned his army of tens of thousands of followers (known as the Ansar, or Dervishes) against the Egyptians. In 1883 an Egyptian force of 7,000 (commanded by a British officer) marched off to vanquish the Mahdi, only to get cut to pieces instead. The massacre encouraged British officials, unwilling to take responsibility for this Egyptian colony in revolt, to pull out of Sudan altogether. Gordon, with his determination and experience in the region, was just the man for the job. Or so it seemed.

He arrived in February 1884, with orders to evacuate some 15,000 Europeans and Egyptians from Khartoum. Installed in the governor-general's palace, he instead began to fantasize about defeating the Mahdi and installing a new regime. But the Mahdi was moving in: Soon his forces had blocked the Nile, cut the telegraph cable and laid siege to the city. Penned inside Khartoum, Gordon buzzed with defense schemes and stratagems; back in Britain, his plight became a cause célèbre. Meetings were held, donations collected and prayers offered for his relief. Succumbing to intense public pressure, Prime Minister William Gladstone—deeply opposed to further entanglement in the region—agreed at last to send a rescue party to retrieve Gordon. But as the troops chugged up the Nile, they saw no Egyptian flag flying over the city: Khartoum had fallen to the Mahdi just two days earlier, and Gordon was dead. Only in 1898, when Gen. Herbert Kitchener slaughtered more than 10,000 at the battle of Omdurman, would Britain defeat the Mahdists. Young Winston Churchill, who was there, suggested that a stonemason be sent to Trafalgar Square to carve the word "Avenged" on the pedestal of Gordon's statue.

These events have been well rehearsed by historians, though by providing a unified account, Green calls attention to the varied imperial motives—humanitarian, economic and strategic—and Muslim political and religious visions that inspired them. His spirited writing presents all this with cinematic verve through a cast of memorable characters. Running a close second to Gordon for best leading man is Garnet Wolseley, dubbed "our only General" by Disraeli, and the model for Gilbert and Sullivan's "modern Major-General." This "peppery Jingoist" had managed to suppress native resistance in India, China, Canada and West and South Africa before being ordered to crush the Urabists—in which he succeeded, though his promise to bring his daughter "the tip of Urabi's nose, cut off with the Wolseley pocket knife" remained unfulfilled. (Wolseley can now be visited in effigy in London on Horse Guards Parade.) Green gives us Khedive Ismail "wallow[ing] in earthly pleasures like a hippo"; and the radical cleric Jamal ed-Din al-Afghani, "bearded, voluble, and a little bug-eyed…a prophet without honor in many lands, usually under an assumed identity." Then there is the Mahdi himself, surrounded by portents from birth, who, it was said, "spoke at two weeks of age" and as a baby caused milk to flow from a virgin's breasts.

Full of narrative energy, *Three Empires on the Nile* resembles the romping imperial novels so popular among readers at the time (such as *The Four Feathers*, set in Sudan)—or a sort of *Flashman* minus the women. Indeed, at times Green's writing is so enthusiastic that it borders on error, as when he describes the Egyptian minister Nubar Pasha's mustache as "herbaceous"; the British big-game hunter Samuel Baker as "slaughtering swaths of Indian and African fauna"; or the "gouts of debris" cast up by the shelling of Alexandria. But the main trouble is that it is hard to know how well supported his vivid incidents really are. Pages at a time pass by unfootnoted, leaving the impression that Green has opted for animated paraphrase over considered and inevitably more cautious synthesis. Similarly, the short bibliography is notably thin on recent scholarship, which makes some of the book's larger questions and arguments seem inadequately considered.

Take the death of General Gordon. By the end of the siege Gordon had become his own chronicler, writing his way through the last tense weeks in his diary; with his death, the record blurs. We do not really know how it happened. One contemporary image, popularized in a

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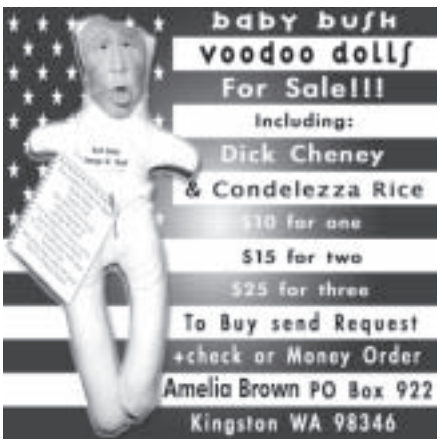

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late Victorian painting by George Joy (not William Joy, as Green has it)—and successful "either in spite or because of its inaccuracy"—held that the general experienced the dignified end of a martyr: Standing above the invaders at the top of a staircase, he was pierced through the chest by a Dervish spear. Another explanation, based on two eyewitness accounts, suggests that Gordon fought his way down the stairs with pistol and sword before being overwhelmed by the vastly more numerous Ansar. Green gives a blow-by-blow account of the slashes and shots by which Gordon fell: Lanced in the left shoulder, he fired on until his bullets ran out; shot in the chest, he dragged himself up to continue fighting with his sword; stabbed in the right side with another spear, he finally "disappeared into a swarm of Dervishes, their swordpoints flashing in the early morning sun." It is a gripping passage, but as Green remarks in an endnote, given that "the circumstances of Gordon's death remain controversial," its precision is somewhat misleading.

By the time Gordon's would-be rescuers reached Khartoum, a soldier had arrived in the Mahdi's camp bearing a cloth bundle. It was unwrapped to reveal Gordon's severed head, its keen blue eyes staring open. But the Mahdi's celebration was short-lived. Within six months, he too was dead, of fever. Green graphically describes the "traditional medicine" applied by the Mahdi's wives: "They brought him gourds filled with liquid butter and a concoction of pomegranate skins. They cupped him with heated gazelle horns and slabs of iron. They injected his urine into his eyes, they wrote prayers on his stomach and hands, and they wrote koranic passages on a piece of paper, washing it off and giving the inky water to the Mahdi to drink." Such superstitious remedies, the reader might infer, were as likely to have hastened his end as to have prevented it. Green's sole source for this account is a 1932 "biography" of the Mahdi by Richard Bermann, which has been described by a historian of Sudan as "shocking for its bitter xenophobia and racism." Notably, none of these striking details appear in Fergus Nicoll's superb biography of the Mahdi, *The Sword of the Prophet*, deeply researched in Arabic as well as European sources.

There are different styles of telling stories, but some are more convincing than others. Although academic historians sometimes give memoirs, contemporary biographies and travel accounts short shrift, this is partly because such materials (as the spate of recent fabricated memoirs underscores) do not always cleave to the highest standards of evidence. Moreover, European sources of the period tended to be tinged by the cultural biases so famously condemned by Edward Said as Orientalist and must, at the very least, be treated with an informed and skeptical eye. An unfortunate consequence of Green's otherwise compelling narrative is that he ends up reproducing numerous stereotypes. He describes a worldwide "eclipse of Muslim power" in which the Ottoman Empire was "rotten with corruption, conservatism, and xenophobia" and "the Mughal emperors of India were crushed by first the French and then the British" (which will certainly be news to the French). He portrays Islam and modernity as fundamentally at odds, telling us that "from Africa to India, Muslim societies failed to adapt to modern technology and communications, and seemed paralyzed before modern banking and science." He replays the now controversial argument, advanced by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in their 1961 book *Africa and the Victorians*, that Britain was essentially forced into imperial intervention by indigenous disorder—though he emphasizes humanitarian motives over strategic ones. And his description of the collision between Britain, embodied by the pious figures of Gladstone and Gordon, and its various Egyptian and Sudanese adversaries echoes a "clash of civilizations"–style opposition between Christian West and Muslim East.

"Jihad" is a clever word to put in the title of a book. In the average media-saturated American mind, it conjures up wild images of terrorists, suicide bombers and Muslim "fanatics." Green clearly wants readers to draw parallels between the demonized jihadis of today and the Mahdi's spear-toting followers, clad in their signature patchwork *jibbas*. But it would be suggestive to consider how and when "jihad" acquired the resonance it did, since in the Victorian British ear it would not have rung in quite the same way it does in ours. Many had declared jihad on Britain before the Mahdi. In the late nineteenth century, the term would have evoked the Indian Mutiny, which encouraged xenophobia and racialized fears in general as much as it did anti-Islamic sentiment in particular. Nor, for that matter, would Victorian Britons have associated religious war so consistently with Islam, in the way that many Americans appear to today. "Chinese" Gordon, after all, had established his reputation by battling

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the Taipings and their messianic quasi-Christian leader Hong Xiuquan.

If anybody merits the designation "fanatic," it is Gordon, whose faith reached such a pitch of mystical intensity that he stood out as a zealot even in his fervently evangelical day. Lord Derby called him "a fanatic of the Puritan type"; Sir Evelyn Baring found him "half-cracked." Gordon spent his penultimate year walking in the footsteps of Christ around Jerusalem, Bible in hand, identifying possible locations for various holy events. The mission to Sudan, he felt, was a divine obligation: "If God is with me," he wrote, recalling Paul's Letter to the Romans, "who can or will be hurtful to me?"

Green emphasizes Gordon's religiosity and uses it as a mirror against the Mahdi. This is a nice observation, if not a novel one; the contrast between these devout leaders even inspires several fictitious encounters between Gordon and the Mahdi in *Khartoum*. Gordon's weird piety, widely remarked on by his peers, forms a major theme in Lytton Strachey's brilliant critique of him in *Eminent Victorians* (1918). (Surprisingly, Strachey's essay does not appear in Green's notes or bibliography, though Green does allude to it once as a "glib expression" of post-Victorian "cynicism.") But by implicitly comparing Gordon with today's evangelicals, Green skirts an issue equally deserving of comment, namely the degree to which Gordon—like so many of those involved in British empire-building—was an adventurer, an outsider and a maverick. Instead of relating Britain's imperial past and America's imperial present, Green might have suggested a more accurate comparison between nineteenth-century contemporaries, such as Gordon and his American peer George Custer.

Perhaps the greatest missed opportunity comes as a consequence of Green's insistent relation of these events to the occupation of Iraq. The book even opens with a preamble declaring: "In a major Arab nation, a secular tyranny is toppled by Western intervention, but an Islamic backlash turns the liberators into occupiers.... This is not the Middle East in the twenty-first century. It is Africa in the nineteenth century." But it would be hard in any case to miss the point. One is almost encouraged to read this as a roman à clef, with Urabi as Saddam, perhaps; the Mahdi as any one of a number of militants; and Gladstone as Tony Blair. But only on the last two pages does Green turn to the current situation that any reader would surely first associate with Sudan: Darfur. In the nineteenth century, Darfur sat squarely on the slave routes that drove hundreds of thousands of black Africans into the hands of largely Arab slavers; in 1874, it was absorbed into Egyptian hands by a notorious slave lord. The dark history of this ethnically fueled traffic does not merely resemble present realities; it suggests a clear line of continuity with them. Yet despite Green's attention to the slave trade and its abolitionist opponents, this element of his story consistently gets overshadowed by the sexier topics of religious violence and imperial occupation—just as Darfur is eclipsed in the public eye by Iraq. As in real life, strategy, economics, fear and war trump compassion, humanitarianism and calls for tolerance. ■

Humboldt's Gift

MARK M. ANDERSON

MEASURING THE WORLD. By Daniel Kehlmann. Translated by Carol Brown Janeway. Pantheon. 259 pp. $23.

Something unusual has been happening in Germany. For more than a year one of the bestselling books has been a novel by a young Austrian writer named Daniel Kehlmann that is neither a thriller nor a racy love story. Even more surprising: It has nothing to do with Hitler. It is "simply" a well-written tale about two famous scientists of the nineteenth century, Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Friedrich Gauss, whose feats of intellectual prowess and all-too-human weakness are narrated with humor, lightness and (for novels in German) uncharacteristic dispatch. Published in 2005, the hardcover edition has sold almost a million copies and been translated into some twenty languages. In a felicitous English version by Carol Brown Janeway, *Measuring the World* has also received glowing reviews here, with *Time* magazine (not exactly a champion of foreign-language fiction) declaring it one of the "ten best" books of 2006. So what is going on?

First, to German readers Kehlmann is not completely unknown. The son of a prominent German-Jewish theater director, he had already published four novels and a collection of short stories (all still untranslated into English) by the time he was 30. His fourth novel, *Kaminski and I*, revealed a gift for satire and unusual characters—the narrator is an amusingly unself-conscious, overambitious art journalist—and was a genuine popular hit. Kehlmann has also distinguished himself as a remarkably discerning and independent critic, equally at home with contemporary American writers (Updike is a characteristically unfashionable favorite), Latin American magic realists (especially García Márquez and Vargas Llosa) and the European masters (Cervantes, Stendhal, Proust). Trained in philosophy at the University of Vienna, he has written on Voltaire and Isaiah Berlin. And as if this weren't enough, he is a fan of popular culture, from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* to *The Simpsons*.

At 32, Kehlmann is something of a *Wunderkind*, and he may well feel a special bond with the two Enlightenment *Wunderkinder* in his latest novel. Alexander von Humboldt began publishing scientific articles while still a teenager, and in his late 20s he embarked on a five-year exploration of South America that made him world famous. At the end of that tour he spent two weeks with President Jefferson, returned to a hero's reception in post-revolutionary Paris and spent the next five decades publishing book after book about the "great harmonies of Nature." In a recent study of the "Humboldt current" in American intellectual life, Aaron Sachs praises him as the first ecologist, a proto-Transcendentalist who influenced Poe, Emerson, the Hudson River School painters and a host of scientists and explorers. For the centennial of his birth in 1869 the *New York Times* dedicated the entire front page to him with a single-word headline: "Humboldt."

That fame has long since ebbed in America, but in Germany Humboldt is still celebrated as a genius embodying the scientific ideal of broad-minded inquiry. Along with his brother Wilhelm (a celebrated linguist who founded the first modern research university in Berlin),

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he belongs to *die Klassik*: the classically minded generation of writers and thinkers, including Goethe, Kant and Schiller, who set the terms of modern German culture.

Who would have thought such high-minded stuff could be a vehicle for comedy? But in Kehlmann's playful hands, German classicism's lack of humor becomes humorous. Unfailingly *fleissig* (hard-working) and proud, Humboldt tilts his way through the South American jungles, Quixote-like, in a vain search for the grand unity of the cosmos. In the meantime the bumps and scratches of mundane reality intercede: Brother Wilhelm tries to poison him as a child; flies and mosquitoes pester him in the Amazon; a prostitute horrifies him with an attempted seduction. Playing Sancho Panza to Humboldt's Quixote, his French assistant Bonpland can only sigh and wonder: "Did one always have to be so German?"

If Humboldt represents a certain German intellectual type, at once unworldly and socially ambitious, Gauss is cast as his opposite: indifferent to fame or social advantage and totally absorbed by his mental universe. A Mozart of mathematics who stunned his teachers while still in elementary school, he published his magnum opus at the age of 24 and became one of the greatest mathematicians of all time. Here too Kehlmann displays his flair for narrative, turning potentially story-killing discussions of higher arithmetic into droll biographical episodes. To explain Gauss's discovery of a non-Euclidean geometry where parallel lines meet, for instance, Kehlmann has him secure a ride in a hot-air balloon, where, high above Hanover, the 12-year-old sees the curve of the earth and recognizes that space is bent. "This is how God sees the world," the balloonist tells the boy.

Much to the consternation of the mere mortals around him, Gauss is so smart he can do Harry Potter–like feats of magic. "This was the hardest mathematical textbook in German," his pedantic and rather sadistic elementary school teacher objects. "Nobody could study it in a day, and most particularly not an eight-year-old with a running nose." But after half an hour of questioning, the teacher turns pale in recognition of the boy's genius and, "presumably to control his emotions, grabbed the stick and Gauss received the last beating of his life." On his wedding night, at a particularly delicate moment, he suddenly realizes how to calculate the trajectories of planets. "It was too important, he couldn't forget it," and to his bride's disbelief he jumps out of bed to jot down the formula.

This is all great fun, of course, and one can easily enjoy the story without asking oneself what kind of "historical novel" Kehlmann has written. But what relation do these fictional characters bear to the actual individuals? For Kehlmann hasn't just added imaginary private moments to the historical record; he has also taken liberties with history itself, sacrificing "factual correctness" for the truth of his story. Humboldt's South American guide and constant companion for years, Carlos Montúfar, is nowhere mentioned. "As I began to write my novel," Kehlmann explains in a recent essay, "it quickly became clear to me that I needed to invent. Storytelling requires creating an arc of tension that doesn't exist in reality, one that gives structure and causality to events.... Precisely when one wishes to write about the chaotic nature of reality, which resists measurement, one has to take form seriously."

Underneath the lighthearted sendup of what he has called the "grandeur and comedy of German culture," Kehlmann is really taking issue with Humboldt's belief in an ordered universe that can be precisely mapped if only one labors long and hard enough. Though Gauss neglects his wife and demeans his son, he emerges as the novel's real intellectual hero because he recognizes the fundamental indeterminacy or unknowability of reality. Significantly, Kehlmann has Gauss travel to Königsberg to tell Kant that, notwithstanding the philosopher's claim in *The Critique of Pure*

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Reason, Euclidean space does not "dictate the form of our perceptions…but was, rather, a fiction, a beautiful dream…space was folded, bent, and extremely strange." So old that he's lost his wits, Kant can only babble: "Buy sausage.… And stars. Buy stars too."

By creatively bending history, Kehlmann seems to be trying to approach this modern, Gaussian perspective within the space of his novel, whose true subject is the failure of Enlightenment attempts to "measure the world." In a central chapter, "The River," he recounts a meeting between Humboldt and the director of a Jesuit mission, who tells him about the three scientists sent by the French Academy to measure the Equator. Their journey dissolves into madness and chaos, and the one survivor refuses to recount his experience of the jungle's fundamental otherness: "the throaty sounds and perfectly aimed poisoned arrows that came flying out of the undergrowth, the nocturnal glows, but above all the minuscule displacements of reality, when the world crossed over into otherworldliness for a few moments." Kehlmann's depiction of the South American jungle as a place of "magical realism," where winged dogs and flying saucers and storytelling natives are "natural" facts of life, ultimately makes this epistemological claim against the harmonious, ordered nature of reality and the power of human reason to know it. "Space was universal!" declares Humboldt. "Being universal was an invention," replies the wiser Jesuit, who has lived for years in the Amazon. "And space as such happened where surveyors put it."

If Kehlmann weren't so smart, he might make the mistake of taking himself too seriously. An astute reader of Kafka, he knows, for instance, that the word for "measuring" in his title (*Vermessung*) is the same one that Kafka used to depict K's impossible quest as a land surveyor in *The Castle*; the peculiar structure of time and space in Kafka's novel parallels that of Kehlmann's otherworldly jungle. But instead of pontificating, Kehlmann turns the Modernist allegory into a little joke, showing Gauss as a land surveyor who gets into the castle and meets its owner, a "Count" who seems to know more about physical reality than Gauss and who may be God himself. Kehlmann even pokes fun at himself when he depicts the unliterary Gauss and Humboldt complaining about overly inventive artists who neglect their mimetic task. "Artists held deviation to be a strength, but invention confused people, stylization falsified the world," Humboldt objects. "Disgusting," Gauss agrees.

Reviewers in Germany and in the United States have welcomed Kehlmann's comic novel as a departure from the lugubrious German bestsellers of the recent past—books like Jörg Friedrich's description of the horrific destruction of German cities during the air war (recently published by Columbia University Press under the title *The Fire*) or Günter Grass's novel *Crabwalk*, about German civilians killed by a Russian torpedo. It is true that Kehlmann belongs to a different generation and is not bound by the same sense of taboo and guilt that has haunted Germans born near the end of World War II. Moreover, his partial Jewish heritage—his father was imprisoned in a work camp, and numerous relatives were deported and killed—further complicates the matter of his "Germanness" without providing an alternative identity.

In any case, Kehlmann's *Measuring the World* is no less concerned with "the German question"; it simply provides a different means of exorcising the ghosts in the national closet. One might compare its satire of *die Klassik* to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapping of the Reichstag in 1995, when this most somber historical site suddenly became something playful and light—for a moment. For that giant birthday gift to the nation was only a brief interlude in the ongoing debate about the legacy of National Socialism, to which Germans inevitably returned, mesmerized by the translation of Daniel Goldhagen's anti-German diatribe *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Kehlmann's sendup of the overly serious German academic with his craven attitude toward political power provides an insouciant variation on the typically tormented appraisals of the national psyche.

Measuring the World is not quite a masterpiece: Though amusing, its characters are not fully developed beyond the needs of satire to become affecting. And American readers may not get all the German in-jokes that fuel the humor in the original; the English translation is often too elegant and misses the amusingly stilted quality of Humboldt's "classical" German. But Kehlmann has the storyteller's gift of lightness that is rare in any country, not just Germany. He is sure to write other novels and, with losses on both sides of his family during the war (his non-Jewish mother lost her father), he may turn to a more recent chapter of German history in a future book. But for now we might well follow the German readers who have put aside their usual reading matter for this very unusual novel, a true adventure story of the mind. ■

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COCOA BEACH, FLORIDA. Realtor offers free lists of Spacecoast Properties. Exit Island and Beach Realty. (321) 403-3333. Pat@Patsuit.com or www.PatSuit.com.

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MARIN COUNTY, CA. Successful and progressive Realtor®, known for candor and integrity. Linda Walsh Real Estate, (415) 388-3590, lcwalsh@pacbell.net.

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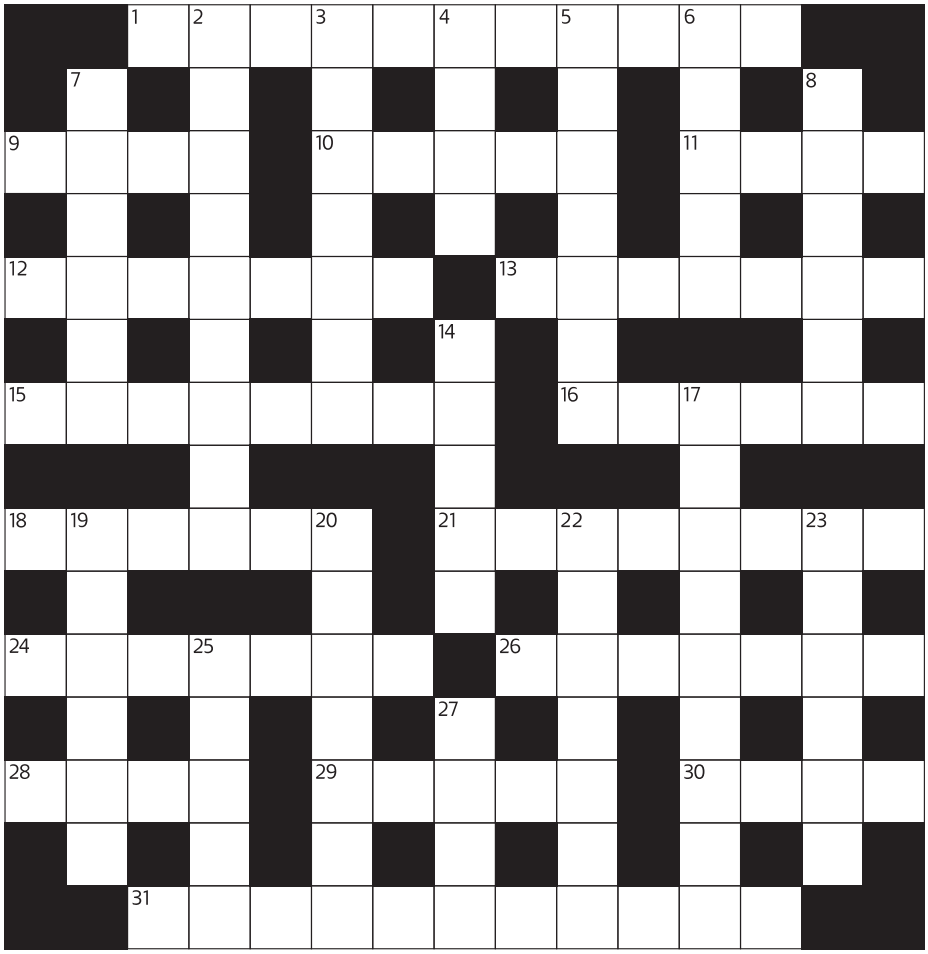
PUZZLE NO. 3079

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 How an artist is sometimes concerned when taking money out of his account. (11)

9, 10 and **6** down An old-fashioned exclamation made with tender farewell in the evening. (4,5,5)

11 Someone like Othello returns with this private enclosure, though such for improvement is often implied. (4)

12 What is contained in a disabling limp seems to be worth a quick look. (7)

13 A false hope gets a slangy denial, but it is often said to be on the rise, particularly after burning. (7)

15 Remain when there's an outbreak of war, and I get found in the middle of it, which is one way up for you. (8)

16 A name for one responsible for such as this is "a real dog!" (6)

18 There's no end to Wednesday, evidently, being wrongly convinced by it. (6)

21 Once they said this was a pretty good seat, but the first part might hanker over the last. (8)

24 Jumps up like hope is expected to do eternally. (7)

26 Concerning something one is expected to carry when shopping for the kind that doesn't have a fancy association. (7)

28 A test perhaps suggesting an alternative to Mr. Gore. (4)

29 and **22** down Singers of the music with *Hair*? (12)

30 and **4** down Happy pieces of music of the Maple Leaf variety, as a put-on for special occasions. (4-4)

31 My French way has a bad sort, to sit on your head, which probably looks awful! (11)

DOWN

2 It goes in with a little party—a tiny sort—which may be double at times. (9)

3 A Shakespearean character boasted of being able to tell this from a hawk, and wash the components. (4-3)

4 See 30 across

5 Chews it to pieces, three such posing a question as to a future get-together. (7)

6 See 9 across

7 Is the sailor allowed to have a drink from one? (6)

8 The beginner without a single bad habit? (6)

14 Sometimes referring to a Judge who favored quick despatch, but only N. C. has it on display. (5)

17 Evidently there is not a heavy following for what is supposed to warn one of the car ahead. (4-5)

19 How doughboys were supposed to refer to Ypres in an unaspirated whisper, perhaps. (6)

20 Throws up the dirt about the wrong set of short literary reviews. (7)

22 See 29 across

23 Laid up about a small indication of the rather morbid type. (6)

25 Not the ice house of the usual sort, but it makes the oil go out of it. (5)

27 Describing a unique type, one goes to the capital of Romania. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3078

J	O	H	N	S	■	U	R	O	L	O	G	I	S	T
O	■	O	■	C	■	N	■	V	■	R	■	N	■	A
S	U	B	M	A	R	I	N	E	■	D	A	T	E	S
E	■	S	■	T	■	N	■	R	■	I	■	R	■	S
P	R	O	P	H	E	T	I	C	■	N	O	I	S	E
H	■	N	■	E	■	E	■	O	■	A	■	G	■	L
■	■	■	■	■	A	N	I	M	A	L	C	U	L	E
T	■	B	■	P	■	T	■	P	■	S	■	E	■	D
H	O	R	S	E	H	I	D	E	S	■	■	■	■	■
A	■	O	■	R	■	O	■	N	■	R	■	A	■	L
N	O	U	N	S	■	N	O	S	T	A	L	G	I	A
K	■	H	■	O	■	A	■	A	■	N	■	A	■	D
Y	E	A	R	N	■	L	I	T	I	G	A	T	E	D
O	■	H	■	A	■	L	■	E	■	E	■	E	■	E
U	N	A	L	L	O	Y	E	D	■	R	I	S	E	R

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Towson Watch Company

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